

Theology vol 10.

A

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OF THE
Gospel of St. Matthew.

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A

VINDICATION
OF THE
Gospel of St. Matthew,

Against a late TRACT entitled,

*A Dissertation or Inquiry concerning the
Canonical Authority of the Gospel
according to Matthew.*

By LEONARD TWELLS,
Vicar of St. Mary's in Marlborough.



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NOTARIAL





THE P R E F A C E.

THE Author of the *Dissertation*, to which the following Piece is a Reply, seems apprehensive of no Censure on his Performance against St. *Matthew*, save this, that it is *not very becoming a Private Person*, p. 6. But whatever he may think, I believe most Men judge of the Reasonableness of such *Undertakings*, rather from the Learning, Honesty and Modesty of the *Undertakers*. A Writer, who discovers himself to be a Master of his Subject, and who fairly represents Facts and Reasonings, and who opposes settled and established Notions with Decency, was hardly ever envied the Liberty of publishing his Inquiries, though a pri-

a private Person. But whenever a Piece appears in the World upon an important Point of Religion, made up chiefly from old and thread-bare Topicks; with little Learning and *much* Prevarication; expressing no Deference to established Opinions, but the utmost Insolence towards all, who act up to their Characters and their Convictions in the behalf of them, such a Performance will very ill become any Person, be his *Character* ever so publick or considerable.

If then the *Dissertation* before us shall appear to be of this Sort, the Author's Defence of himself, p. 6 and 7, will by no means reach his Case. For what though *the ablest Divines have busied themselves on the same Subject*, will this justify another's meddling with it, who happens to have no Abilities? If the greatest Friends to *Christianity* have ingenuously owned every Difficulty relating to the *Canon of the New Testament*, shall this encourage the Enemies of that Religion to use dishonest Freedoms with the *Holy Books*? It is certain, that *Truth always*

always gains Ground, and is the more illustrated by Inquiries, that are learnedly, fairly and honestly conducted. But it does not follow, that Old and Baffled Cavils revived, unconscionable *Invectives* and perpetual *Chicane*, must necessarily produce the same Effects.

I am the fuller on this Head, in hopes, that when the Free-thinkers shall proceed to question the Canonical Authority of the remaining Gospels, they may be induced either to amend their *Faults* or their *Apologies*. They may indeed proceed in the Way they have hitherto pursued. Father *Simon*, and other learned *Criticks* on the New Testament, will continue to supply them with *Difficulties*, which, when taken apart from their respective *Solutions*, and heightened by proper *Colourings*, may improve into *Objections* as considerable as those urged by our Author against the Gospel of St. *Matthew*. But then those Gentlemen may assure themselves, that, in such a Case, the Friends of Revelation will carefully attend their Motions, and that they may expect to hear

viii *The P R E F A C E.*

hear again of every *remarkable* Devia-
tion from *Truth, Pertinence* and *De-
cency.*

I am further to acquaint my Reader,
that I have generally abridged the Ar-
guments of my Author ; but it has
been my constant Endeavour so to do it,
as that the Objections might lose nothing
of their Force. And, I believe, that
every one who has read him atten-
tively, will think such a thing very *prac-
ticable.*





A

VINDICATION OF THE Gospel of St. Matthew.

THE HE Author of a late *Dissertation or Enquiry concerning the Canonical Authority of the Gospel according to Matthew*, complains, that very little hath been offered in its Support by the (Right Reverend) Author of the third *Pastoral Letter*, p. 3. of which Letter he had before said, in his Title Page, that it pretended to be a *Defence of the Canon of the New Testament*. He tells us, p. 9. that the *Pastoral Letter-Writer*, as he familiarly calls my Lord of London, has made a slight *Defence for the Gospel History in general, and its*

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its reputed Authors in particular, p. 23. He terms the Pastoral Letter *a loose Defence*, p. 74. He calls for another sort of *Defence for the Truth and Authority of Gospel History against Infidels, than is made in the last Pastoral Letter.* Lastly, he concludes his Dissertation with pronouncing it *a most imperfect and superficial Epistle, wrote in Defence of the whole Canon of the New Testament.*

But all these strong and repeated Complaints proceed wholly on a Mistake of the Bishop's Design, which was, not to defend the *Canon* of the New Testament against the Cavils of Hereticks and Infidels in general, but, to use his Lordship's own Words, *to give [his People] a clear View of the Evidences both of the Truth and Authority of those Writings,* Pastoral Letter, p. 7. He wrote against no particular Infidel or Heretick, much less against the whole Body of them: But on occasion of a late Tract, which denied the Scriptures to be a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners, and of the Endeavours of some to represent the four Gospels *exclusive* of all other Scriptures, as the sole Standard of Belief and Morality, he thought it incumbent upon him to guard his *Dioceſe* from such Delusions, by laying before them the principal Evidences, upon which it is reasonable to receive the entire Body of the New Testament Writings as of Divine Truth and Certainty. And if his Lordship has succeeded in this Attempt; if, in particular, he has supplied the *Christians*, over whom he presides, with as good or better Testimony for the Truth of the *Gospel*, than that whereon

whereon they and the rest of the World credit other ancient Histories, he has sufficiently fortified them against every infidel Cavil, and without particular Answers to each Objection, has given them Reason to conclude of such things in general, that they do not affect the Truth of the Christian Religion. For so long as Men have rational Evidence for the Genuineness of the New Testament, bare Possibilities that this Evidence may deceive them, are no just Matter of Concern to them. Much less are internal Difficulties to be regarded by those whose Belief is founded on such Testimony as cannot be disproved. For Difficulties, as is well observed by Dr. Jenkins, (*Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2. p. 546. 4 Ed.) can never alter the Nature of Things, and make that which is true to become false. If therefore the Bishop of London, in his third Pastoral Letter, has proved those Positions of his which relate to the Truth of the Scriptures and their faithful Transmission by such general Evidence, as uses to obtain credit in all like Cases, he has sufficiently provided for the Instruction of his Diocese in the main View of his Pastoral Letter, which was to shew where they may find a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners. After this to have descended to particular Cavils, had been unnecessary to his main Purpose, and would have made the Letter itself too bulky as well as too intricate to the Generality of those for whose immediate Service it was intended. Notwithstanding therefore the affected Complaints of the *Dissertation-Writer*, he has too much Sense

not to know, that if the Bishop of *London* had filled his Pastoral Letter with discussing every Doubt here raised, nine Parts out of ten of those, for whose Use it was compiled, would never have given it the reading. And of this I am so well satisfied, that I venture to appeal even to this Writer's own Conscience, on a second and most serious Consideration, whether his repeated Censures of the Pastoral Letter, as defective in this Point, were not rash and unjust.

The Author of the Dissertation before us, observes, p. 11. that the Bishop's Positions, so far as they relate to the four Gospels, more particularly, are these :

First, That these Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, That they have been faithfully transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages.

And he agrees, that if the Bishop attends to and makes good these Positions, he will merit the Applause of all Christendom. He further observes, *ibid.* that according to the Bishop, if we would be satisfied of the Truth of any History, the two things we chiefly enquire after are, the *Knowledge* the Writer had of his Subject, and the *Character* he bore in Point of Integrity. Nor does he object to these Heads of Enquiry as insufficient to satisfy us in the Truth of History. But he complains that the Bishop does not enter into any such Enquiry, especially not in the Method he thinks proper. All, according to him,
the

the Bishop says to it is, *That the greatest Enemies to Christianity have never denied but that there was such a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, who lived at the time the Gospels speak of, and who made choice of several Persons to be his Disciples or Apostles, two of which were Evangelists—These, he says, left their Callings and Occupations to attend and receive Instructions from Jesus; they both saw him and felt him, were daily conversant with him and the like.* And besides these natural Qualifications (he calls them) *they were supernaturally assisted also to give an Account of Christ's Life and Actions.*

But this is a very imperfect, and indeed unfair Representation of the Bishop's Argument to prove that the Writers of the Gospel had a Knowledge of the Subject of their History, and consequently could not be imposed upon themselves. In order to which his Lordship begins with observing, “*That the real Existence of Jesus of Nazareth, at the Time the Gospel speaks of, and his choosing several Persons to be his Disciples, are Facts, which the greatest Enemies to Christianity have never denied.*” He adds, that the “*Gospel affirms of these Disciples in general, which also has never been denied, that they left their several Callings and Occupations, to the End they might be wholly at Liberty to attend Jesus and receive his Instructions.*” So that the Point in Question, the Knowledge the Apostles had of the Subject of the Gospel, and the consequent Impossibility of their being imposed upon themselves in those Matters, rests upon unquestionable Facts and so needed no further Proof. But his Lordship pursues this Matter, by

by rehearsing several Particulars from the *Gospels* and *Acts* relating to the strict Attendance of the Disciples upon *Jesus*, from the Baptism of *John*, unto that same Day that he was taken up from them, which evince that they were well qualified to bear witness of the Things that were done and spoken by him. As then all these in their preachings were able to declare the most wonderful Events relating to *Jesus*, both before his Death and afterwards: So they were by this means naturally capable of recording the same. Besides which they were further enabled to do both these in the most faithful manner, by a supernatural Assistance for the Work from the Holy Ghost, one end of whose coming was, that he might * bring all Things to their Remembrance, whatsoever *Jesus* had said unto them, and two of these, thus enabled, wrote two of the Gospels, viz. *Matthew* and *John*. As to *Mark* and *Luke*, if they were not two of the seventy Disciples, as some affirm, they are expressly mentioned in the New Testament as fellow Labourers with St. *Paul*, to whom the whole Gospel had been immediately revealed from Heaven. St. *Peter* also makes mention of *Mark*, and calls him *his Son*. So that these latter Evangelists must certainly have had sufficient Knowledge of the Subject they wrote upon, from those, who naturally, or miraculously, or both ways were unquestionable Masters of it. The Bishop observes further, that agreeably to this the Antients represent that *Mark* committed those Things to writing, which had

* Joh. xiv. 26.

been related to him by *Peter*, and that *Luke* recorded in a Book the Gospel which *Paul* preached. To which he adds from *Eusebius*, that St. *John* the Apostle approved the three other Gospels, and gave his Testimony to the Truth of them: That Copies of these Holy Gospels were with great Zeal conveyed to remote Countries by the Successors of the Apostles, and were read in the publick Assemblies, as the Foundation of Faith, without any Distinction in Point of Authority.

And thus stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel History with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject, which shews that they were not impos'd upon themselves. Now what says his Lordship's Adversary to this plain State of the Argument? Does he deny that the *Existence* of *Jesus* and *Choice* of his Disciples, and their *constant Attendance* upon him are incontestable Facts? Or does he pretend to say, that Persons in such strict Attendance upon *Jesus* could possibly want Knowledge of him and his History? No, he says neither, but runs off from the Question, after having assured his Reader upon his own Word, that the Bishop *has failed absolutely in setting before us a clear View of all the Evidences for the Gospel Facts*; though he knows, all the while, that his Lordship had hitherto pretended to no more, than to shew that the Gospel History had this Mark of Truth, viz. that the Writers of it were well informed of the Subject they undertook, and had proved it from Facts hitherto never called in Question.

But

But though the Existence of the Person of *Jesus* has always been admitted by the Enemies of the Christian Revelation as certain Fact, the Inquirer is willing at least that it should be admitted no longer. To fling Doubts therefore in the Reader's Way, he observes, p. 13. " What Pagan Authors of his (*Jesus's*) own time wrote of him cannot now be so perfectly known ; but may be pretty well guess'd at by the Primitive Zealots destroying all their Writings, and making it their Merit so to do." What the Writers at and near our Lord's own time wrote of him is not our present Concern : That they did at all write of him as a really existing Person, which is fairly implied here, is enough for the Bishop's Argument.

We are further told, p. 14. " That it is certain there is no mention of any such Person as *Christ* by Name, in any one profane Author, whether *Jew* or *Pagan*, at or near *Christ's* own time, as the Letter Writer without any Ground is pleased to affirm :" For which Charge upon his Adversary he refers to *Pastoral Letter*, p. 16. But when we come to examine the Letter itself, we find that no such Thing is there affirmed, as that the Name of *Christ* occurs either in *Jewish* or *Pagan* Writer, at or near his own Time. His Lordship's Words are these. " Several of the Facts related in the Gospels receive Confirmation from the Testimony of other Historians, both *Jewish* and *Pagan*, which lived in or near the Time." We see here no particular Facts spoken of; nor is it said of the Gospel Facts indefinitely, that they are mentioned in

in other Historians, but only that they received Confirmation there. Notwithstanding therefore this Writer's affected Sorrow, that no Name of *Christ* should be found in the Writers, at or near our Saviour's time, he sets out with the good Faith and Honesty of an avowed Infidel, and calumniates boldly. But how does he prove this Point? Why first by representing *Tacitus*, *Suetonius* and *Pliny*, who mention the Name of Christ, as not near his Time. "As to *Tacitus*, says he, *Suetonius* and *Pliny*, Contemporaries under *Trajan*, "these all lived in the second Century." Answer. So they did in the first, *Trajan's* Reign commencing *Anno 98*. But admitting that they wrote in the second Century, it was certainly very *early* therein, and not too far distant from the Days of Christ, to be termed near his Time. Further he says of these three Writers, "That they lived "at an immense Distance from *Palestine*, and "could know nothing of the Gospel History, but "from common Report." This immense Distance was no more than 1600 Miles, between Places too that maintained a perpetual Intercourse. There was, in and after our Saviour's Time, a *Roman* Governor and Garrison constantly at *Jerusalem*; the former of which regularly transmitted the Affairs of his Government to the Emperors of *Rome*, and the latter were always ready to satisfy the Enquiries of their Friends in the same Place. The three Historians therefore abovementioned might know something of the Gospel History, without being beholden to common Report. To all this the Inquirer adds, that "what those Writers say either of *Christ* or his

C "Followers,

" Followers, is so little for their Credit, that the
 " Letter-Writer had much better omitted all
 " mention of them." Answer. What these Historians say of Christ is not to the present Purpose. They mention his Name, and they lived not long after his Times; and they had Opportunities of being informed, whether *Christ* was a really existing Person or not, which is sufficient to the Bishop's Purpose: And yet one of these the younger *Pliny* speaks nothing to the Discredit of *Christ*, and much to the Honour of his Followers*. And he had unquestionable Opportunities of knowing their true Characters.

" What we have, says the Inquirer, besides
 " these, are either known Forgeries, or they are
 " found only in the Christian Priests or Fathers
 " who cite them as they please." The known
 Forgeries here spoken of respect the Testimonies
 of *Josephus* among others. Of which the utmost that can be said is, that they have been suspected and cavil'd at by Criticks: But on the other hand they have been learnedly and solidly defended by late Writers †, whose Vindications remain *unanswer'd*, and, I verily think, *unanswerable*. They are in all the extant Manuscripts of *Josephus*, and in every Edition of that Historian, and therefore are in themselves valued Evidences for the Gospel History, till better Arguments are brought against them by Infidels, than confident Assertions that they are *spurious* and *forged*. As

* Plin. Ep. 97.

† *Huetius* in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*. Mr. *Daubuz* in a Latin Tract written entirely on the Subject; and latest of all Mr. *Martin* in a French Dissertation to this very Purpose.

for the Confessions of *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, and *Julian* the Apostate, to the same effect, nothing but the wretched and defenceless Cause of Deism could urge Men to reject them, merely because they are found in the Christian Priests and Fathers, under a pretence, which has no colour nor the least support from Fact, that those Writers were wont to cite as they please. Whereas they must have been worse than mad to cite things that their Adversaries never wrote, whilst their Works were in so many Hands. As to what the Bishop's Adversary urges further, "That it appears from those Citations, how the *Jews* and *Gentiles* denied Christ's divine Birth, Life, Miracles, Resurrection, &c." it deserves no regard, unless he had thought fit to give us the Particulars of that denial. Besides, it is past dispute that they admitted all that is requisite to make good his Lordship's first assertion in the behalf of the Gospel History, viz. that the Authors of it had a perfect knowledge of the Life and Actions of *Jesus Christ*, and could not be deceived in it themselves. And admitting that the Heathens of the second, third and fourth Centuries, knew nothing of *Jesus*, yet it is plain that the remains of the earliest Antichristian Writers, then in their Hands, supplied them with no Testimonies against the Gospel Facts; otherwise we may be sure they would have entered into the reality of those Facts, and not have admitted them, as, it is plain, they did.

Though our Lord confined his preaching and appearance to the limits of *Palestine*, yet the Inquirer will never be able to persuade reasonable

and unprejudiced Men that the Heathen World could not, in the nature of things, possibly know any thing of him, but from his own Followers. He must first convince us, that there were no *Gentiles* then residing in *Judæa* or *Galilee*; no *Roman Forces* at *Jerusalem*; no Governor to see or hear from unconverted *Jews* the mighty Works recorded, as done by him, where-ever he came. He must also make it appear, that *Pilate* gave no account to the then reigning Emperor of the remarkable Transactions under his Government, or that whilst he constantly transmitted the ordinary Occurrences of his time, he was utterly silent about the most wonderful Events that ever happened since the World began. Again; when soon after our Lord's time, the Heathen World heard of him from his Followers, was it impossible for them, by correspondence with the *Gentiles*, residing at *Jerusalem*, or by the Proselytes that yearly went from all Parts of the World to keep the great Festivals there, to know the truth of the Gospel Facts, whilst fresh in the memory of every one? For though our Saviour's Person was obscure, his fame was universal throughout *Palestine*.

Once more, admitting that the written Gospels never came to light till *Trajan* or *Adrian*, and that the Christians carefully preserved those Books from the Heathens till the third or fourth Century, of which more hereafter; yet the History and Doctrines of our Lord, conformably to those Gospels, had been all along preached in open Assemblies, summed up in Apologies, and confessed by the Martyrs. So that the main of

our Lord's wonderful History was never a secret to the Heathen World, as our Author would have it. And therefore they might have detected any falsehood therein, as they certainly would have done, if any false things had been affirmed of him. For which reason their not refuting the Gospel Facts is no inconsiderable Argument of the unanswerable Truth of those Facts.

But here the Bishop's Adversary triumphs and says, p. 16. " That all the Writings both of Heathens, Jews and primitive Christians, which any way glanced at our present Christianity have been destroyed." So that Arguments for the verity of the Gospel Facts from their silence are disingenuous. To which it may easily be replied, that no writing against Christianity had been suppressed in the Days of *Celsus*, *Porphyry* and *Julian the Apostate*, who all allow as much of the Gospel Facts to be true, as is necessary to shew that *Jesus Christ* really existed, and that the Writers of his History had a sufficient Knowledge of their Subject. We may therefore take it for granted, that no Heathen Authors, in or near our Saviour's time, had pretended to refute these Facts of the Gospel by counter Testimony, since the Enemies to that Religion in the second, third and fourth Century do not deny, but rather admit and allow them, before any Writings of this sort had been destroyed.

In a word, the Matters contained in the Gospels, though not the Gospels themselves, were early known to the Heathen, whilst Tradition concerning the Person of *Jesus* was fresh among both

both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, residing in *Palestine*. For though the Inquirer affirms it to be certain, that the *Gentiles* had never any personal Knowledge of *Jesus* at all, the contrary is most certain, both from the Gospels themselves, which relate his Arraignment before a *Gentile* Magistrate, surrounded with *Gentile* Forces, and from *Tacitus*, who tells the same Fact. Since therefore the Heathen World knew what was said of *Jesus* by his Followers, and had opportunities of refuting any thing falsely said of him, and yet never did refute his History, in whole or in part, the Truth and Faithfulness of that History receives abundant confirmation from the silence of Heathen Authors on that Head.

The Reader is desired to look back to p. 9. of *Pastoral Letter*, where he will find that the Bishop, speaking of our Lord's Apostles in general as well qualified to bear witness of the things that were done and spoken by him, says, " And what " we find particularly declared by one might " truly be said by all of them whenever they " preached. That which we have heard, which " we have seen with our Eyes, which we have " looked upon and our Hands have handled, " declare we unto you. The things they re- " corded as said and done by Christ, they heard " from his own Mouth, and saw with their own " Eyes, and did not deliver them upon the re- " port of others." But his Lordship did not mean, that the Apostles in their Preachings (of which alone and not of their Writings he is here to be understood) declared or delivered nothing as said or done by Christ, to which they were
not

not each of them Ear and Eye-witnesses; but that they were generally present at the Doctrine and Actions declared by them, not delivering them wholly upon report from others. But his Adversary, resolving to mistake and to misrepresent him, changes the Bishop's Words, and makes him say, " What we find particularly declared by one might be truly said by all of them. That they declared only what they had heard, what they had seen with their own Eyes, and their Hands had handled." p. 17. and again, p. 20. that the Apostles recorded *nothing* but what they saw with their own Eyes, nothing upon the report of others. After which he warmly opposes the Case of St. Matthew, and the many Instances of Passages recorded by him in his Gospel, which he neither *heard* nor *saw*, and therefore must have received from the report of others. A Point the Bishop is no way concerned to dispute with the Inquirer, having never maintained the contrary. Sufficient it is for his purpose, that in every Particular of this kind, *Matthew* had sufficient opportunities of true Information, either from our Lord himself or from his fellow Apostles. That *Jesus* or his Followers did actually inform *Matthew* of these Particulars, it is not incumbent on the Bishop to make good, as his Adversary insinuates, p. 19. It is enough for his Argument, that *Matthew* either saw and heard all that he relates with his own Senses, or might be informed of it from those that did. For from thence it still follows, that *Matthew* had a sufficient Knowledge of his Subject, or at least Opportunities of knowing it, and consequently

consequently could not be imposed upon himself in the History delivered by him. But remarkable is the Reason assigned by our Author, why *Jesus* should not be thought to have informed *Matthew* of those Particulars in his Gospel, which himself had neither seen nor heard, *viz.* "Be-
cause the humble *Jesus* seems plainly to have had
no design, either that the Apostles or any one
else should record any thing of his Life and Ac-
tions." For supposing this to be true in the sense
of recording in *Books* or *Writings*, most certainly
it was the humble *Jesus*'s design that his Ap-
ostles should *preach* his Life and Actions. This
appears from many Passages in our present Gos-
pels, particularly *Matth.* xxiv. 14. xxvi. 13. *Mark*
xvi. 15. But how should *Jesus*'s Apostles preach
the Gospel effectually, unless *Jesus* took care to
inform them of what befel him before they were
called, or during their absence, after their voca-
tion. And provided the Authors of the Gospel
had but a right Knowledge of the Subject they
wrote on, 'tis the same thing to the Bishop's Ar-
gument, whether their own Senses or their Mas-
ter informed them of it.

Next our Author proceeds to St. *John*'s Gos-
pel, of which he says first that all know his
Gospel was very near his own time ascribed to
another Person. And indeed we all know, that
the *Alogi*, mentioned by *Epiphanius*, *Hær.* 51.
were absurd enough to ascribe his Gospel to
Cerinthus, though plainly and principally levelled
against *Cerinthianism*; but that these *Alogi* lived
very near St. *John*'s time, no Man, at all conver-
fant in Antiquity, will pretend to say. Learned
Men

Men generally place these Hereticks in the end of the second or else the beginning of the third Century, i. e. a full Age later than St. John's time. Secondly, He assures us, that the *Proeme* of St. John's Gospel has been thought by some to be a mere (*Platonick*) interpolation or addition to the original Gospel. But since that *Proeme* is found in all Copies and Versions, the genuineness of it can on no just pretence be now controverted.

He is very angry with the Writer of the *Pastoral Letter*, p. 20, 21. for mentioning the Tradition of some Antients, that *Mark* and *Luke* were two of the LXX Disciples, and thinks, that he durst not name those Antients, because he knew he had none to name before the third Century, whose Tradition is of no Consequence. But any one who consults *Pastoral Letter*, p. 11. may see the Reason of the Bishop's not naming his Authorities for that Tradition to be, that he laid little or no Stress upon it, only mentions the thing by the way. And yet that the Tradition of the third Century is of no Consequence, is an assertion that comes very ill from a Writer, who will appear anon to build mighty Matters upon a History that never came to light till the fourth Century. Further, I must beg leave to dissent from our Author when he affirms, that *Papias*, Bishop of *Hierapolis*, was the most ancient of all the Fathers. For 'tis notorious that *Clemens Romanus*, *Hermas*, *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, are all older than he. The truth is, he wanted to have the greatest possible Distance of Time between *Papias* and the third Century; and in

such Cases, right or wrong, the Advocates for Infidelity will affirm whatever the present Exigency requires.

The Bishop is concerned to prove that *Mark* and *Luke*, as well as *Matthew* and *John*, had a Knowledge of their Subject ; and in order thereto, having just mentioned the Tradition of the Antients, that makes them to have been two of the LXX Disciples, on which his Lordship builds so little, that he does not urge or apply it to the Point in view ; he chiefly insists upon the mention we find in Scripture, that *Mark* and *Luke* were Fellow-labourers with St. *Paul*, and that St. *Peter* calls *Mark* his Son. The direct Consequence of which is, not as the Inquirer misrepresents it, that they composed by immediate Inspiration, but that they had sufficient Information concerning the Subject of their History, if not from their own Senses, however from the preaching of those that were Eye and Ear-witnesses to the Facts and Sayings therein related. But the Inquirer says, p. 21, 22. " that the Names of " *Mark* and *Luke* were ordinary Names, and that " it still remains a Question, whether the Authors " of these Gospels were the identical Persons men- " tioned by St. *Paul* and St. *Peter*." As to the latter of these, St. *Luke*, he is plainly the same Person with the Author of the *Acts*, who in the greatest Part of that History, speaks of himself as a Companion of St. *Paul's* in his Preachings and Travels ; so that of him there can remain no doubt. Besides, the Bishop had obviated this entire Objection, (*Pastoral Letter*, p. 12.) by Testimonies from early Antiquity, which unanimously

mously declares that the Evangelists *Mark* and *Luke* were the very Persons mentioned in the sacred Writings, as the Attendants on the two above mentioned Apostles. To the Testimony of the Antients, that *Luke* composed his Gospel out of the Preachings of St. *Paul*, the Author of the *Dissertation*, p. 22. in a Note at the bottom, opposes from *Anonymus*, St. *Luke*'s own saying, *That he wrote what he received from those who from the beginning were Eye-witnesses of the Word*: which cannot be understood of *Paul*. But here *Anonymus* was certainly mistaken. For *Luke* does not say, that he compiled his Gospel from the Information of those who had been Eye-witnesses from the beginning. It is of those who had wrote before him, that he affirms this. As to his own particular, he pretends to no more than an exact Information in general which may relate to St. *Paul*, as well as to any other. And his Lordship further confirms the Verity of their Gospels from the Testimony of *Eusebius*, l. 3. c. 24. that *John* the Apostle saw and approved theirs as well as St. *Matthew*'s Gospel. And what has his Adversary to oppose to all this Evidence, that the four Evangelists had a Knowledge of the Subject on which they wrote, and were not imposed upon themselves? Why, even nothing. Every appearance of Things and every Testimony is against him. All he does therefore is to put on a bold Face, to bear us down that the Bishop mistook his Busines, that we are at no certainty; that his Lordship concludes this Head with too much assurance; though nothing can be more modest than his Expression, viz. "thus

" stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel History, with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject." He leaves it to the Reader to determine how valid the Evidence was, and only lays it before him for his Judgment thereon. Lastly, he falsely charges the Bishop with changing his Note, p. 23. " One while he would have it believed *Mark* and *Luke* were the Disciples of *Jesus*; but now he is content if you will but admit them to be the *Pedisequi* of *Peter* and *Paul*." And what is there in this Conduct, but what is common to all Writers? He would be wanting to his Cause, who when differing Traditions equally serve it, should conceal that Advantage from his Readers. Besides, I have shewn already, that the Bishop, by the slight mention he makes of the former Opinion, plainly shews that he was far from being desirous to have it believed.

After his Lordship had proved the Truth of the Gospel History from the knowledge the Writers thereof had of their Subject, he next confirms it, by shewing, that as the Evangelists were not imposed upon themselves, so their Characters were so good, as to set them above all suspicion of designing to impose upon others. " They were not artful or designing Men, but on the other hand were reproached by the Enemies of Christianity for being rude and mean, simple and illiterate. That they had no worldly Views in propagating the Gospel, but on the other hand Persecution, Affliction and Reproach, were almost the constant Attendants of the Propagators of it." In answer therefore to these rational

rational and pertinent Suggestions, one might justly expect from the Bishop's Adversary, either a denial of these Facts or of the Consequences drawn from them. But being able to do neither of these, he betakes himself to his old Arts, and leads off his Reader to another Question. He thinks the Letter-Writer, and most other Divines, are in the wrong, whilst they affect to acknowledge the *Rudeness* and *Meanness* of the first Propagators of Christianity, and, to make them the more unquestionably in the wrong, he carries their Concessions so far, as to make them asperse the Founders of Religion, and fix to their Persons the base *Characters* of *Fools* and *Beggars*. To which we readily answer, that though we acknowledge the first Preachers of Christianity to have been generally *poor* and *illiterate*, yet we are far from yielding or esteeming them to have been *Fools* or *Beggars*. They were honest and industrious Men, without Education or Craft, as Men bred to the low Professions of Life generally are, and the Infidels are welcome to make the most of this Concession. But we shall never quit the visible Advantage redounding to the Truth of the Gospel History from its Authors being plain and undesigning Men. And if the strongest Objection to the *Alcoran* had been the illiterate Condition of its Author, Christians of all others should have been ashamed to urge any thing so weak in itself, and so liable to be retorted on their own sacred Writings. But I know of no Christian Authors that have objected, as our Author represents them; and as he names none, 'tis to be hoped that it may pass for another

ther Instance of his readiness to affirm any thing upon emergent Occasions.

Secondly, Being not able to deny that the Apostles propagated Christianity without worldly Views, he falls upon the Author of the *Pastoral Letter*, for putting it upon a wrong Proof. "To
 " be constantly persecuted and reproached, may,
 " he thinks, and frequently does attend a too
 " eager pursuit after the World, never a Con-
 " tempt of it," p. 24, 25. But do the too eager Pursuers after the World use to persist in those very Courses which have been constantly attended with Shame and Punishment, and from which it is natural and reasonable to expect no better Treatment, which was the Case of the Apostles? And can any thing but the most absolute Contempt of the World induce Men to persist in Methods constantly attended by *Persecution* and *Calumny*?

Our Author farther charges his Adversary with not knowing that the Apostles were actually reproached and persecuted: By which, I suppose, he means, that the Bishop was not an Eye-witness to such Proceedings. Otherwise the Evidence of this is as plain as for any other Fact equally distant in Time. Grave Histories report the thing; and no one Writer in or near those Times contradicts it. He adds, p. 25. "that it
 " seems to him an ugly Reflection upon the Man-
 " ners of the Apostles, and the Doctrines they pub-
 " lished, to say, they were persecuted and re-
 " proached. For, as St. Peter says, *if they were*
"followers of that which was good, who could harm
"them?"

But

But does this Writer in earnest think, that all who are persecuted and reproached deserve it on account either of their Doctrine or Manners ? Or is this Plea intended to reflect on St. Peter, as asserting a Thing contrary to frequent Experience : If the former, what shall we say of Socrates, and other wise and good Men, who have undergone Sufferings and Defamations, without any Reflection upon their Manners or their Doctrine ? Again, what shall we say of the Christians, when persecuted by Trajan. Does not Pliny, his *Proconsul*, own of those under his Government, that they were both persecuted and reproached ; on whose Manners nevertheless he makes no Reflection, but owns them to be innocent and virtuous People ? But probably this Suspicion about the Manners and Doctrines of the Apostles, from their being persecuted and defamed, is only *Argumentum ad Hominem*. If the Advocates for Christianity insist upon the *Sufferings*, without giving up the *Innocence* of the Apostles, a Reflection will fall upon an inspired Writer, who, our Author thinks, has maintained the thing to be impossible. If, on the other hand, St. Peter be allowed to have spoken Truth, the Character of the Apostles suffers, and with it the Bishop's Argument to prove the Gospels written by them to be a true History. But plain it is, that St. Peter did not mean, in the Words quoted, to deny the absolute possibility of Innocence being at any time unsafe ; only that in the ordinary Condition of things Matters stand thus. For in the very next Verse he supposes it possible that Men may suffer for Righteousness

teousness sake, and pronounces them happy whose Lot it is so to suffer.

Thus it appears that the Right Reverend Author of the Pastoral Letter has made good his two Points with relation to the Truth of the Gospel History. He has made it appear that the supposed Writers thereof had a sufficient Knowledge of their Subject, and that their Characters, in Point of Integrity, are unquestionable. From whence it follows that they could neither be *impos'd* upon *themselves*, nor had *Inclination* or *Design* to *impose* upon *others*. The Consequence of which is, that the four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. If any thing is wanting to make good this Position, it is that the reputed Authors of the four Gospels really wrote the Books that go under their respective Names. A Point not controverted by the Bishop's Adversary; but with respect to the first of the four Gospels, that of St. Matthew.

But then this Gentleman not daring to put that Question to a fair Issue, confounds two Things very distinct in themselves, viz. the *Genuineness* and the *Canonical* or *Divine Authority* of these Books. If it appears, that the Persons whose Names they bear, were their real Authors, the Divine Authority of those Writings is a necessary Corollary thereto. For we know that the four reputed Evangelists were either inspired *themselves*, or at least were the *Companions* of those that were inspired. Since therefore the Question at present is, who were the real Authors of the four

four Gospels, and not properly or immediately, what the Authority of those Books are, the Inquirer proposes an incompetent Standard of Judgment, p. 26. when he blames us for not attending to the *Propriety* and *Excellency* of the Subject Matter of those Books, and to the evident *Marks* and *Signs* they themselves afford of their own Divinity. For such Considerations are no further pertinent to the present Question, than as they help to discover the true Authors of the said Gospels. Now in all such Disputes, good Sense and the Reason of Things require that we determine our Assent from the most prevailing Tradition of the Times next following those Books, that are the Subjects of our Enquiry, especially where the Pieces themselves contain no internal Testimony concerning their respective Authors. But the Author of the Dissertation before us, who admits this Rule to be a reasonable one in judging of profane Books and Authors, loudly protests against the Use of it in sacred ones. He tells us, p. 26. " That the Infidels will object to " the Testimony of the Fathers as Party Bigots " every Man of them, and as they conceive, Mo- " dellers of that Religion they are brought to " vindicate." But this is both an unreasonable Objection in itself, and foreign to the present Concern. For we do not, in the Point under Debate, appeal to the Fathers for the Truth of Opinions in Religion, but for a Matter of Fact, viz. who in their several Ages were reputed the Authors of the four Gospels. Of this the Bishop's Adversary seems conscious, and therefore speaks more to the Purpose, if what he says be

true, when he tells us in the same Page; " That
 " all know who are ever so little acquainted with
 " their Writings, that they are not to be credited
 " in the Relation scarce of any one single Matter
 " of Fact, for the many Negligences, Imperti-
 " nences and Falshoods, that are found in them;
 " eat up too as they were with the grossest Su-
 " perstitions, and carried away with every Notion
 " which coincided with those Superstitions." Of the
 Fathers he further affirms, that the major Part of
 them, if they were now alive, would for their Heresies,
 " their Knavery and inexcusable Ignorance and
 " Credulity, be the Shame and Blot of their own
 " Profession." We are not surprised to hear
 such heavy, and at the same time unsupported
 Charges against the antient Writers of the Christian
 Church from Infidel Authors. We have
 been long used to their haranguing on Subjects
 that they understand nothing of, and have ob-
 served, that they are at such times under the sole
 Direction of Prejudice. It is in vain therefore to
 go about undeceiving those, who in a great Measure
 know better things already, and give Char-
 acters without any regard to Truth and Propriety,
 but merely to serve a present Turn. But
 to the rest of the World, we desire to observe,
 that had the Primitive Fathers of the Christian
 Church been such *deplorable Wretches*, as they are
 here represented, it had been impossible for Reli-
 gion, under such Direction, to make its Way in
 the World, over all the *Power, Wisdom* and
Learning that appeared in the behalf of *Paganism*. Without entring therefore on the parti-
 cular Defence of those antient Sages, the single
 and

and indisputable Fact of the Gospel's speedy Propagation confutes the Charge brought against the Fathers, and shews that they must at least have been Persons of Truth and Reputation for Honesty. The Cause of Christianity, how good soever in itself, must have sunk under the Infamy of such Advocates as our Author describes the Fathers to have been, and Persecutions had been needless Engines to suppress a Religion recommended by none but Knaves and Fools. In short, the Invectives against the Primitive Writers are so void of Truth and even Probability, that nothing can match them, but that other Infidel Conceit, that these Fathers were the Modellers of the Christian Religion: For it is well known that, before the End of the first Century, the Gospel had spread itself over the greatest Part of the known habitable World, and that the Bishops or Fathers of the Church thus widely dispersed, if inclined to model Religion, had no Opportunities for jointly carrying on such a Fraud. Besides, is it at all credible, that Men should die rather than renounce a Religion of their own modelling ? that Men should defy the most terrible Inflections in Defence of a known *Utopian System* ? He that can believe this must be a greater Bigot for Infidelity than ever yet appeared for the Cause of Revelation: He must be altogether *eaten up with Deistical Prejudices, and carried away with every Notion, how ridiculous soever that coincides with those Prejudices.*

Till therefore the Infidels can produce better Reasons for rejecting the Testimonies of the Fathers to sacred Books and Authors, than general

Imputations of Knavery and Falshood, which, without special Proof, are never in any Case admitted to set Evidence aside, the Depositions of those venerable Writers will always weigh with sober and impartial Men for the *Genuineness* of the Gospels.

And now at length, p. 27. our Author proceeds to the main Purpose of his Book, *viz.* to shew what Hereticks and Antiscripturists generally urge against the Authority of St. *Matthew's* Gospel. But this he performs at so loose and unmethodical a Rate, that my Reader would be bewilder'd in a close Attendance upon him. For the sake therefore of the Truth and of Perspicuity, I shall choose rather to reduce his Objections under certain Heads, which will be found to take in every thing advanced by him, and answer each of them in their proper Order.

All the Objections therefore against the Authority of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, which lye scattered in the Dissertation before us, tend to prove, either that this Apostle was not the Author thereof, or that St. *Matthew* was not qualified to be a faithful Historian in the Case, or that this Gospel, by whomsoever written, has not been faithfully transmitted to us.

The Objections against St. *Matthew* the Apostle's being Author of the Gospel which goes by his Name, are of two sorts. Some proceed upon the Defect of the external Evidence for that Fact, others upon supposed internal Evidence against it.

Objections against *Matthew's* being Author of the Gospel which goes under his Name from Defects in the external Evidence for that Fact, answered.

Objection the first urged, *Dissert.* p. 28, 29.

The Title of this Book, the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, doth not denote that it was penned by the Apostle's own Hand, but rather by some other Person from his Mouth or Teaching. This, as most think, is the true Import of the Greek Title. If the Meaning of it had been that *Matthew* was himself the Writer of that Gospel, the Title would have been, the Gospel wrote or composed, by *Matthew* the Apostle, in the same distinct manner as the Epistles are intitled. The Titles were affixed to the Gospels not by the Writers themselves, but by others long after, who might set the Titles on Purpose to deceive, as many did in the early Days of Christianity.

Answer. The precise Antiquity of the Titles to St. *Matthew's* and the other Gospels cannot well be determined. But they are certainly very ancient; probably as ancient as the first Collection of the Gospels, which is supposed to have been made in the beginning of the second Century. Most certainly they were used long before the End of that Age, as appears from the Writings of *Irenæus* and *Clemens Alexandrinus*, wherein the Gospels are spoken of according to the Titles now prefixed to them. It is further evident from the said early Fathers, that these Titles were understood to denote that the Gospels were pen'd by those respective Apostles and Evangelists. For they

they both ascribe them to *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, as their direct and immediate Authors. It is therefore a great Mistake in the Objector to say that the Title of the Gospel according to *Matthew*, according to *Mark*, &c. does by no Construction imply that they were themselves the Writers. For besides that *Irenæus* and *Clemens Alexandrinus* understood the Greek Titles in that Sense, nothing was more common among the ancient Ecclesiastical Writers, than to use *κατὰ* or *secundum* instead of the *Genitive Case*. Thus *Epi-phanius* Hær. 29. N. 7. calls the Heresy of the Nazarenes *τινὲς κατὰ Ναζωραῖς ἀρετῶν*. St. *Ambrose* comes up directly to our Point in his Proeme to St. *Luke's* Gospel. *Ausus est etiam Basilius scribere quod est secundum Basilem.* So that the Gospel written by *Basilides*, and the Gospel according to *Basilides* were equipollent Expressions. Nor are we destitute of profane Authorities for this kind of Construction. For Instance, *Plato Pol. l. i.* calls the Pleasures of the Body *ταῖς κατὰ σῶμα ἥδοναῖς*. Lastly, all the *Oriental Versions*, and particularly the *Syriack*, in the Judgment of most learned Men, as early as the former part of the second Century, render the Greek Titles of the Gospels genitively, knowing no Difference between *Ἐυαγγελίου κατὰ Ματθαῖον* and *Ἐυαγγελίου Ματθαῖον*. There is nothing therefore equivocal in these ancient Greek Titles, but they strongly indicate the Authors Names, and expressly declare them. In short, the great Antiquity of these Titles is a strong Proof that they were not affixed by Guess, but according to the same undoubted Tradition, which enabled the

Church

Church to reject all other Gospels, as not written by the inspired Persons whose Names they bore.

Objection the second urged, *Dissert.* p. 31.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew, as it is now called, bore many other different Titles and Names in the first Age of Christianity; being presumed to be the same with that formerly intitled according to the *Hebrews*. Divines agree it is the same with that which was somewhere ascribed to the twelve Apostles; at other times to some particular Apostle, as to *Bartholomew*, to *James*, to *Peter*, and last of all to *Matthew*. At other times it has been imputed to single Heretics, such as *Cerinthus*, *Tatian*, &c. And again to whole Sects, such as the *Nazarenes*, the *Eboinates*, the *Encratites*, and the like. All which different Denominations sufficiently evince that the Ancients were utterly at a Loss to whom to ascribe this Gospel.

Answer. For the Truth of the various Matters contained in this Objection, we have not so much as a single Voucher: Only the Dissertation Writer gives it all upon his own Word. And how little Reason we have to rely on that, will fully appear, when we have gone through with the Objection.

First then Dr. *Mill*, Proleg. № 38. & seq. not only affirms, but demonstrates, that the Gospel intitled according to the *Hebrews*, was different from the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*. Nor are we certain that any Gospel in the first Age bore the Name of the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*. For the oldest Writer that mentions

such a Gospel is *Hegeſippus*, who wrote not till the Year 170. It does not therefore appear that the Gospel of St. *Matthew* ever bore the Title of the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, much less that it was ever so called in the very first Age of Christianity.

Secondly, The very first Time we hear of such a Gospel as that according to the twelve *Apostles*, is from *Origen*, who flourished towards the middle of the third Century. Granting therefore that it was the same with the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, and that again the same with the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, it doth not appear that this latter was ever called the Gospel according to the twelve *Apostles* in the first Century.

Thirdly, That the Gospel of St. *Matthew* was ever ascribed to *Bartholomew* is a mere Conjecture of some Moderns. And so far is it from being certain that it was so ascribed in the Apostolical Age, that no mention is made of *Bartholomew's* Gospel till *Jerom's* Days.

Fourthly, I know no manner of Grounds for saying that the Gospel of *Matthew* ever bore the Name of *James*, unless it be that the Author of the *Synopsis of Scripture* among the Works of *Athanasius*, ascribes the Greek Version of that Gospel to him, which is quite foreign to the Purpose of the Objection before us.

Fifthly, I am perfectly at a Loss for a Reason, why the Author of the Dissertation affirms that *Matthew's* Gospel was ascribed to *Peter*. A forged Gospel there certainly was under his Name, but

But it never, that I can learn, went under the Name of any other Apostle.

Sixthly, The learned Mr. Jones in his new *Meth. of settl. Canon. Authority of the New Testament*, Part 1. p. 221. conjectures, that Cerinthus's Gospel was the same with the Ebionite or corrupted Gospel of St. Matthew, and in Hebrew. And upon this slender Foundation our Author ventures to affirm that the Gospel of St. Matthew was in the first Age ascribed to Cerinthus.

7. The Dissertation Writer had somewhere read that Tatian compos'd a Harmony of the four received Gospels, calling it *euāγγέλιον διὰ τεσάρων*; and that some called this Medley the Gospel of the Hebrews. And hereupon he sets him down as one to whom the Gospel of St. Matthew was imputed in the first Age; forgetting, or else not knowing, that Tatian did not flourish till *Anno 172.*

8. The Nazarenes were a Sect of Christians not expressly named by any Ecclesiastical Writers till the latter End of the fourth Century. It would be strange therefore if they could be deemed Authors of St. Matthew's Gospel in the first Age of Christianity; when probably no such Name subsisted.

9. It has been thought that the Ebionites, as well as the Nazarenes, corrupted the Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew. And on this sole Bottom they are set down as reputed Authors of it.

10. The Encratites were the Followers of Tatian abovementioned, and ought not to be considered distinct from him.

Upon the whole, the Objector has not proved by any one Instance that the Gospel of St. Matthew bore any different Title in the first Age of Christianity from what it does at present.

Objection the third, p. 45, 46.

That *Irenæus* who lived a hundred Years after St. Matthew's Gospel was published, is the first Ecclesiastical Writer now extant, who cites that Apostle as Author of it—That his Testimony is founded on the Tradition he received from *Papias*, whose Scholar he was. A Man, says *Eusebius*, of weak Judgment, a fabulous Author, and one who led many into Error, and particularly his Pupil *Irenæus*. Upon this Fool and Knave both (according to *Eusebius*) does the whole Tradition of Matthew's being the Author of the Gospel we now make use of, depend. For as *Irenæus* had it from old *Papias*, so *Eusebius* plainly took it from them both, notwithstanding his bad Opinion of the Men. And to these all the following Church Writers venture to subscribe, without any Disquisition into the Fact; particularly that the Letter-Writer passes it over without offering to furnish the World with some more material Evidence.

Answer. Though it seems not to have been the Custom of Church Writers till the Days of *Irenæus*, to cite St. Matthew's, or any other Gospel by Name, yet they were cited without Names all along from their Publication, and St. Matthew's Title to the Gospel called his, is corroborated by History within less than fifty Years after it came abroad. For *Papias*, who flourished, according to *Cave*, Anno 110, and who had con-

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versed with Apostolical Men, expressly ascribes the Gospel in Dispute to *Matthew*. For which see *Euseb. H. E. l. 3. c. 39.* What *Eusebius* says of *Papias* no way detracts from his Credit, as a relator of Matters of Fact. He does not charge him with misreporting any thing; only with taking some mystical Expressions of the Apostles in a literal Sense, and delivering them as such. It is with respect to these that *Eusebius* says he was σφίδεα σμικρὸς τὸν νῦν, a Man of little Discernment; a Character that may affect the Doctrines delivered by him, but is no Disparagement to the plain Facts he relates. Nor does that Historian represent him as a fabulous Author, i.e. as a Man who put off his own Inventions for Truth. He only tells us that " *Papias* delivered as coming to him from unwritten Tradition some new Parables and Teachings of our Lord, καὶ τιὰ ἄλλα μυθικάτερα, and some other things that have the Appearance of Fables." But that he did not hereby charge *Papias* with any false historical Facts, but only with delivering mystical Doctrines as literal Truth, is plain from what immediately follows. " Among other things (says he) he tells us of a *Millennium* that is to commence after the Resurrection from the Dead, at which time the Kingdom of Christ is to be erected upon this Earth in a bodily, i. e. a secular Sense." The Historian accounts for this Error in *Papias*, without calling his Integrity or Veracity at all in Question, placing it wholly to the Score of a superficial Judgment. Lastly, *Eusebius* no where represents *Papias* to have been a wilful Deceiver of others,

as the Words cited in the Objection do imply, but only says that he gave Occasion to very many Ecclesiastical Writers that followed him to take up the like (*Millenary*) Notions, out of regard for the Antiquity of the Man. From all which we see that the Author of the Dissertation hath greatly injured both *Papias* and *Eusebius*, when he vouches the Authority of the latter for the former's being both Knave and Fool. *Eusebius* thought him neither the one nor the other, but an honest Man, though not good at distinguishing between Allegory and Truth. So that if *Irenæus* and those that followed him, had built the Genuineness of St. Matthew's Gospel upon this very early and valuable Tradition, it would have afforded no just Matter for Surprise. But this is far from being the Case. Our Author indeed calls *Irenæus*, *Papias*'s Scholar, and makes *Eusebius* call him his Pupil, in order to pass it upon the Reader, that *Irenæus* must have received his Sentiments in this Matter from his old Master. But neither here nor elsewhere does *Eusebius* make *Irenæus* to have been the Pupil of *Papias*. And therefore, though *Papias* be acquitted of being a fabulous Writer in the bad Sense of the Word, his Accuser must unavoidably lie under that Imputation. In short, if the Fountain of Tradition with relation to St. Matthew's Gospel must be sought for where *Irenæus* received his Christian Institution, not *Papias* but *Polycarp* was his Master, who was able to supply him with Notices of this kind immediately from the Apostles themselves, and probably had so supplied him. But in truth neither *Irenæus* nor

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the following Fathers support the Genuineness of St. Matthew's Gospel, or of the other Gospels from the Tradition of any single Person, how ancient or veritable soever, but from the Tradition of the Apostolical Churches traced up to the Apostles their Founders. So *Irenæus Adv. Hær. l. 3. c. 3.* So *Clemens Alexandrinus, Strom. l. 2. p. 453.* So *Tertullian, l. 4. contr. Marcion. c. 5.* affirming of all the four Gospels by Name, that they were with the Churches *a Primordio*, proving this from no single Testimonies, but from the Authority of the Apostolical Sees. On the very same Principles do all the Writers of the third Century ascribe to St. Matthew, and to him only the Gospel which goes by his Name. So monstrously untrue is the Assertion of the Dissertation Writer, that the whole Tradition of Matthew's being the Author of the Gospel we now make use of, depends upon the single Testimony of *Papias*. Equally false is what he says, "that *Eusebius* took this Tradition from *Papias*" "and *Irenæus*, notwithstanding the bad Opinion he had of the Men." For first, we do not find he had any ill Opinion of either of them as relators of plain historical Facts. He blames *Papias* only for a Defect of Judgment, which does by no Means disqualify a Man for reporting ordinary and well known Traditions. And as to *Irenæus*, it does not appear that *Eusebius* had a bad Opinion of him in any respect. I am sure he discovers a good one of his Fidelity, which is most to the present Purpose, when speaking of him and *Clemens Alexandrinus, l. 3. c. 23.* he says of them that they were *wise, Men deserving Credit.*

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But whatever the Opinion of this Historian was concerning those two Fathers, we have Demonstration that he had a Tradition concerning the Gospels, and that of *Matthew* in particular, which he received from neither of them. For *Eusebius* relates the Occasion of St. *Matthew's* writing, which neither *Papias* nor *Irenæus* do. And for the time of that Event, *Eusebius* differs twenty Years or more from *Irenæus*; and therefore could not borrow from him; nor, as to this Circumstance, from *Papias*, who is altogether silent about the time when St. *Matthew* wrote his Gospel. Thus, we see, in the present Objection, scarce any thing has been advanced, but what upon trial appears false or fallacious.

Thus much for the Objections advanced by the Author of the *Dissertation* against external Evidence for *Matthew's* being the Author of the Gospel which goes by his Name. We are in the next Place to consider,

Objections against the genuineness of St. *Matthew's* Gospel from the Internals thereof.

Objection the First, p. 30.

If the Evangelist had been *Matthew* the Apostle, he would have spoke of himself with some Note of Distinction, and in the first Person not the third, as he is both the times that mention is made of him.

This was anciently the Cavil of the *Mandæes* against the Gospel now before us; to which, as urged at present by an Infidel Writer, it may be sufficient to reply, that the Objector

jector would do well to try the strength of it against the genuineness of *Cæsar's Commentaries*, in which the presumed Author is mentioned, not twice only, but perhaps two thousand times in the third Person, and not once in the first. But if such Reasoning would be exploded by Criticks against the genuineness of a prophane Author, we desire to have no more Impertinence of this Kind brought against a sacred one.

Objection the Second, p. 30.

If St. *Matthew* had been the Author of the Gospel vulgarly ascribed to him, he would never have appropriated to himself the reproachful Term of *Publican*, contrary to the natural Policy of all Authors, who have any desire their Works should be credited.

Answer. The Gospel of St. *Matthew* relates in a particular manner, that our Lord, the great Subject of that History, freely conversed and ate with *Publicans*. How ridiculous then would it have been, for a Disciple of his, to have been solicitous in concealing his own past Relation to that Calling? Besides, it has been thought by some judicious Persons, that the mention of *Matthew* the *Publican*, in the Gospel ascribed to that Apostle, is on the other hand a good internal Argument that it is rightly ascribed to him. For it is observable of the sacred Writers, that they are generally such Strangers to the Policy recommended in the Objection, as to be most free with the mention of their own Failings. Thus, in the present Case, St. *Matthew* is the only Evangelist, that joins the Circumstances

Circumstances of his Profession, to the Name he was best known by. Whilst *St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*, on that Occasion, speak of him under the Name of *Levi*, the Son of *Alpheus*, sparing their Brother Evangelist, who was less indulgent to himself.

Objection the Third, urged throughout Pages 60, 61, 62, 63, of the *Dissertation*.

It is a great Defect in the Gospel ascribed to St. *Matthew*, that no Testimony can be found in it of the Author himself, who he was, in what time he wrote, to whom or upon what Motives or Information he began to write: which looks very suspicious, considering that he is for introducing a new Faith and Worship, and publishes Facts almost incredible; such as the miraculous Incarnation and Birth of a God, &c. Under these Difficulties, it was incumbent upon him to have supplied the Defects above-mentioned. If he knew himself to be inspired for the Undertaking, why did he not satisfy us in that Point; since he could not but foresee that a firm Adherence to all he said would be indispensably required of all those, to whose Hands his History should at any time thereafter come, under Pain of eternal Reprobation. Whereas to suppose a literal Inspiration, without any Marks of it, or so much as the Author's own Testimony or pretence to it, is a shameful instance of Credulity. 'Tis taking up with a Religion founded upon Tradition or Church Testimony, for which the Papists are deservedly exposed. Where

* *Mark* ii. 14. *Luke* v. 27.

does *Matthew* pretend to be so much as an Eye or Ear-witness to any of our Saviour's Transactions? Where does he say from whom else he learned them, so as to be able to transmit them to Posterity, with that accuracy a rational Faith requires? *Moses* and the Prophets, the inspired Penmen of the Old Testament, though Workers of Miracles, to which *Matthew* no where pretends, frequently assure Posterity that they prophesied by divine Authority, as necessary to obtain due Credit to the divine Commands. And St. *Paul* follows their Example in some Measure. But the Author of this Gospel is entirely silent in this Matter.

Answer. The immediate End and Design of St. *Matthew*'s Gospel, was, not the Conversion of Infidels, but the Edification of Believers. Ecclesiastical History informs us, that it was written at *Jerusalem*, before the Apostle went thence to the *Gentiles*, in order to supply the want of his Presence, to those he left behind, *Euseb. l. 3. c. 24.* Considering therefore the Occasion of St. *Matthew*'s writing, his silence as to the Points mentioned in this Objection, is so far from being a Defect, that those Particulars could not have been inserted without manifest Absurdity. For how ridiculous would it have founded to tell his Countrymen, after so many Years spent amongst them in preaching the Gospel, who he was, what time he wrote, to whom and upon what Motives and Information he began to write, who perfectly knew all these things already. On the other hand, every one of these Circumstances that is necessary to beget a rational Faith in us

who live at this Distance of Time, is supplied by constant and uniform Tradition. We know, on good and sufficient Grounds, who wrote the Gospel of St. *Matthew*; and that single Circumstance leaves us no room to doubt of his being both naturally and preternaturally enabled to transmit the History of our Lord to Posterity with accuracy sufficient to satisfy every reasonable Man, that all his Relations deserve Credit, and that they cannot be rejected without great Danger. The Evidence for a Religion that was revealed Seventeen hundred Years ago, must, in the Reason and Nature of the thing, in some measure depend on Tradition. In such Cases the Genuineness of sacred Books, and their faithful Transmission, cannot be satisfactorily made out without the Testimony of the intermediate Ages. It is not therefore for Appeals of this kind that the *Romish* Church is condemned, but for founding religious Doctrines repugnant to *Scripture* and *written Tradition*, merely on Oral Church-Testimony. The Case of *Moses* and the Prophets in the Old Testament, and of the Apostles in the New, is very different. The former received particular and distinct Commissions from God, which therefore it behoved them to inculcate to the World. This also was the Case of St. *Paul*, who had a peculiar Inspiration to qualify him for the Office of a Teacher or Evangelist, and therefore thought it necessary to insist thereon in his Epistles. But the College of Apostles were jointly filled with the Holy Ghost, for the very purpose of preaching or writing, as occasion should require, the Life and

History of their Master. If therefore we have reason to believe that he who wrote the Gospel ascribed to St. Matthew, was one of this Number, as we certainly have, nothing further is necessary to obtain due Credit and Obedience to the Contents thereof; nor is the Author of this Gospel to be blamed, for not expressly mentioning his own personal Inspiration.

Objection the Fourth, p. 63, 64.

The Holy Spirit could never be the Author of those Contradictions, Dislocations, Improprieties and Disagreements which Divines, the most learned and pious, have pointed out in their Comments on the Gospel of St. Matthew.

No Divines that are either learned or pious, ever pretended to point out real Contradictions and Disagreements in this Gospel. On the other hand, they labour to reconcile all Appearances of this kind, which must convince us that they think them but Appearances. For no Man in his Senses ever pretended to reconcile confessed Contradictions. Dislocations indeed and Improprieties of Speech, are allowed by the Harmonists and Commentators in this Gospel; but there is no Occasion to charge them on the Holy Ghost, though they are found in the Writings of an inspired Author. For it is generally supposed, that the Blessed Spirit left *Method* and *Diction* entirely to the Prudence of the sacred Writers, only preserving them from all Error, and suggesting to them such Truths as would best answer the Occasion of their writing. Although therefore the Author of St. Matthew's Gospel does not observe an exact Order of Time in his Relations, but

makes plain Narratives of things, never affecting Elegance of Composition, and shewing a natural Genius and Capacity inferior to some *Greek* and *Roman* Historians, yet it is no reflection upon his inspired Character. The Holy Ghost interposed no further than to keep the Penmen of Scripture within the limits of infallible Truth, permitting each of them to follow his own Genius in writing more or less exactly and politely. It was of no concern to the Interests of Christianity, whether the Gospels were composed elegantly or meanly. For God needs no Man's Genius or Capacity to serve him in effecting his Purposes. And the event of these artless Compositions shews, that the Authors of them were equal to their Task. They obtained Credit in spite of all the Power and Learning of the *Gentile* World, and answered all the Ends proposed by them as effectually, as if they had been written by the most masterly Hands.

The Author of the *Dissertation*, whilst upon this Subject, finds fault with St. Paul's Notion, "that a Being of infinite Wisdom should chuse "the foolish, and the weak, the base and de- "spised, i. e. those who are farthest off his "own Image, even the idiotical brutish Part of "Mankind, to teach and reform the wise; or "that he should delight in such rude Instru- "ments, merely to shew his Power against and "confound those who with commendable La- "bour and Study have adorned themselves with "useful Knowledge." But which way could God manifest his Wisdom and Power in re-forming the wise more eminently than by the

the use of such Instruments as were naturally least fit for the Purpose? Had such a Reformation been carried on by able Hands, the Praise of it would have redounded to the Reformers themselves: whereas the natural Incapacity of the first Preachers of Christianity for planning out so noble a System of Religion, justly rouzed the attention of Mankind, and directed them to look up to God as the Author of it. Besides, our Author assigns a different Reason for God's chusing the foolish things of this World to confound the wise, from that given by the Apostle, who does not say, it was *to shew his Power*, but that *no Flesh should glory in the sight of God*. The wise among the Heathen too highly magnified their own Philosophy; some of them had the Arrogance to prefer their own Sages to the Deity himself. When therefore God thought fit to reveal the true Wisdom, he took the most effectual Way to mortify these proud Sophisters, by sending them to Fishermen for Instruction.

Objection the Fifth, p. 66, 67.

The Author of the Gospel ascribed to St. Matthew, hath given us a Genealogy of Jesus, which even the Orthodox allow to be utterly irreconcileable to other Parts of holy Writ; from which spurious Genealogy Cerinthus and Carpocras took upon them to prove, that Jesus was sprung in the ordinary Way from Joseph and Mary, thereby denying his Divinity and Incarnation, Points of the greatest Concernment to Christianity; and which, if given up to those Hereticks, would render the Profession of it, in all

all other respects, as most think, of no effect to the World. In this famous Instance of making *Jesus* descend from *Joseph* the Carpenter, *Matthew* apparently contradicts St. *Luke*. *Matthew's* Genealogy scarcely agrees with St. *Luke* or the *Old Testament*, in a single Degree of Descent, except those of the *Patriarchs*, notorious to all. Either therefore this Gospel was not written till after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, when the publick Records of the *Jewish* Pedigrees (to which the Author before that time might have had free access) perished, together with the Temple; or else it was composed by some *Gentile Convert*, who being a Stranger to the Language, Religion and Policy of the *Jews*, received all Things upon trust from some unfaithful Relator.

Answer. How many Falshoods are crowded into these two Pages of the *Dissertation*. For, first, it is impossible that any orthodox Person should allow the Genealogy of St. *Matthew* to be utterly irreconcileable to other Parts of holy Writ. Secondly, It is a Mistake to say, that this Genealogy administred Occasion for the Heresies of *Cerintius* and *Carpocras*. For Church-Writers only say, that they proved Christ to be the Son of *Joseph* and *Mary* from that Passage. Thirdly, It is a grievous Untruth to say, that *Matthew* makes *Jesus* to descend from *Joseph* the Carpenter, in the Genealogy aforesaid. If this had been his Intention, the 16th Verse, which mentions the immediate Descent of *Jesus*, would have retained the old Form, and have stood thus: *And Jacob begat Joseph the Husband of Mary, and Joseph begat Jesus*

Jesus who is called Christ: Whereas the Genealogist on this Occasion strikes out into a new Mode of Expression; and says, *And Jacob begat Joseph the Husband of Mary, of whom (Mary) was born Jesus that is called Christ*. He must have no Eyes who cannot see that this Genealogy makes Jesus to have had no human Parent but Mary, and that Joseph had no nearer Relation to Jesus, than by being Husband to his Mother. So that instead of disproving the Divinity and Incarnation of Christ, which was the Use Cerinthus and Carpocras made of this Genealogy, it strongly confirms those momentous Articles of Religion; and St. Matthew and St. Luke are both agreed in denying Jesus to be the Son of Joseph. Fourthly, Equally false is the Saying of the Dissertation-Writer, that Matthew's Genealogy scarcely agrees with the Old Testament in a single Degree of Descent, except those of the Patriarchs, notorious to all. For admitting the Descent of the Patriarchs not to end but with David, which is the largest possible Allowance, it will be found on Enquiry that in most of the succeeding Degrees of Descent, the Genealogy of Matthew agrees with that of the Old Testament. They alike make Solomon the Son of David, Roboam the Son of Solomon, Abia the Son of Roboam, Afa the Son of Abia, Josaphat the Son of Afa, and Joram the Son of Josaphat. After this indeed the Genealogist omits three Generations, making Ozias or Uzziah the Son of Joram, who was really his Son's great Grandson. From Uzziah also down to the Captivity, the Genealogies of St. Matthew and the Old Testament

ment agree exactly; for according to them both, Ozias begat Joatham, Joatham Achaz, Achaz Hezekias, Hezekias Manasses, Manasses Amon, Amon Jofias, and Jofias Jechonias. In the Captivity indeed St. Matthew makes Jechonias to beget Salathiel, who in the *Old Testament* is called the Son of *Affir*. But Zorobabel is the Son of Salathiel, in the *Bible*, as well as the *Gospel* of St. Matthew. And lower than these the *Old Testament's Account* proceeds not. Upon the whole therefore it appears, that the *Old Testament* and the Genealogy before us, agree in every Step of Descent, whether of Patriarchs or others, excepting two: And that the Author of the Dissertation must have been guilty either of direct Falshood, or of unpardonable Negligence, when he pronounced, that excepting the Patriarchs, they scarce agreed in a single Degree of Descent. It has however been confessed, that there are some Disagreements between the two Accounts; and it cannot be denied, that there is a vast Diversity between the Genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke: Points which are next to be considered. First then, as to the Disagreements between St. Matthew and the *Old Testament*, they could not possibly proceed from Ignorance, and therefore are no Objection to the Genuineness and Authority of that *Gospel*. For without recourse to any Records, but those of the *Old Testament*, which was always at Hand, the Evangelist, whoever he was, might have got a regular Pedigree from *Abraham* down to the End of that Canon. His Variations therefore were perfectly voluntary: What the Reasons of his Omissions are, we can-

not

not certainly say ; but the most probable Account seems to be that which *Grotius* gives, who supposes this to be done with a Design to make the second and third Stages of Descent, *i. e.* that from *David* to the Captivity, and the other from the Captivity to Christ, coincide with the first which strictly consisted of fourteen Generations. In this he deceived no one. For the *Jewish* Writers seldom stood upon Strictness of Expression in genealogical Matters, but ordinarily call Successors Sons, and sometimes omit five or six successive Generations at once *. So that a Reader acquainted with the manner of the *Jews* in this Respect, made Allowance for these Things, and drew no Consequences from seeming Disagreements of this kind ; but supposed there might be Differences, and yet no Contradictions. Secondly, As to the Diversity between the two Genealogies of St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, *Grotius*, upon the latter of these two Gospels, has learnedly and judiciously accounted for it. He supposes that St. *Matthew* intended no more, than a general View of the Succession in the Heads of our Lord's Family, without mentioning any private Person in it ; whilst *Luke* closely traced up the Pedigree of *Jesus* according to the Order of Nature. And hence it came to pass that from *David* downwards, the two Evangelists scarce agree

* Thus *Shobal*, between whom and *Judah* there were five or six Generations, is reckoned among his Sons, *i Chron. iv. 1.* and *ib. iii. ver. 16*. *Zedekiah*, though really *Jechoniah's* Uncle, is called his Son, because he succeeded him in his Kingdom. Once more in the Genealogy of *Ezra* ch. vii. five or six Generations must have been left out.

in any Names, save those of *Salathiel* and *Zorobabel*; who, as *Ethnarchs* in the Family of *David*, answer the Purpose of *Matthew*, and as they were in the lineal Succession, belonged to St. *Luke's Catalogue*. Upon the whole, there is no more Difference between St. *Matthew's* Genealogy and the Pedigrees of the *Old Testament*, than there is between some and other Genealogies in the same Holy Books; and the two Evangelists, having different Views in their Genealogies, might disagree, without contradicting either the other. On these Accounts therefore there is no room to suspect that the Author of St. *Matthew's* Gospel lived after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, or that he was not a *Jew*, but an ignorant *Gentile Convert*, who took all upon Trust; for the *Old Testament*, after the burning of the Temple, would have supplied him with a fuller Pedigree, if the Evangelist had needed one; and even a *Gentile Convert*, with only the *LXX Version* in his Hand, might have fitted up a Genealogy without taking any thing upon Trust. Not to add, that there are many internal Characters, in this Gospel, which shew that the Compiler of it was not only a *Jew*, but one also that was thoroughly conversant in the Language, Religion and Policy of the *Jews*.

Objection the sixth, p. 67, 68, 69.

" The Author of the Gospel which goes by the
 " Name of St. *Matthew*, grossly misapplies certain
 " Prophecies of the *Old Testament*; and that two
 " Ways. First, By erroneous Citations, insomuch
 " that St. *Jerom* commenting on *Mic. v. 2.* and ob-
 " serving the Variance between the genuine Text,
 " and

" and its Quotation in *Mat. ii. 6.* owns freely that
 " the Evangelist's Quotations out of the *Old Testa-*
 " *ment* are almost all of them erroneous.—*Aut*
 " *ordo mutetur, aut verba & interdum sensus quoque*
 " *ipse diversus fit*—They neglecting (as he thinks)
 " to transcribe them out of the Books themselves,
 " and trusting to their own Memories which failed
 " them. Secondly, By a most wretched and for-
 " ced Construction, the Evangelist hath warped
 " the Passages to a Sense altogether foreign to the
 " Prophet's true Meaning to accommodate them to
 " *Jesus* in proof of his being the Messiah. Which
 " makes some think that as he was not a *Jew*, so
 " neither could his Gospel be calculated for the
 " Use of the *Jews*, who were never wont to apply
 " any of the Prophecies quoted in this Gospel to
 " their expected Messiah. Others think from this
 " sophisticated manner of quoting and accommo-
 " dating Scripture, that the Evangelist was too well
 " vers'd in mystical Theology, and made more Use
 " of it than well comported with a poor illiterate
 " Christian of the Apostolick Age, and therefore
 " was some *Hellenistical Convert Jew*, who wrote
 " soon after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. For the
 " primitive *Christians* had not learned to allegorize
 " the sacred Writings till after the *Platonists* came
 " into the Church."

Answer. We defy the *Dissertation-Writer* to produce so much as a single Instance, wherein St. *Mattthew* cites the Prophecies so erroneously, as to change the Sense. And whilst he retains that, it must be impossible to serve any Purposes of Misapplication, by little verbal Varieties. Particularly we affirm, that the Passage of *Micah v. 2.*

cited *Mat.* ii. 6. does not amount to such an instance. For first the Words are not cited by St. *Matthew*, but by the High-Priests and Scribes of the People, who therefore alone are accountable for the Justness of the Quotation and not the Evangelist, who barely relates it as an historical Fact. Secondly, The Passage, as it lies in the *Hebrew* of *Micah*, interrogatively understood, makes the very same Sense with that cited in St. *Matthew's* Gospel; and the want of an interrogative Particle in the *Hebrew* is no Bar to such an Exposition. For *Hebrew* Sentences are often interpreted interrogatively, where the usual interrogative Particle is not expressed *. Thirdly, 'The Passage in the *Hebrew* is as applicable to the Purpose intended, as the Citation in St. *Matthew* is. So that no Misapplication could possibly be designed by the Variance here complained of. But whilst our Author is complaining of other Men's Misapplications, he himself is wilfully and knowingly guilty of the very same thing: I mean with respect to *Jerom*, whose Sense he has most shamefully misrepresented in his Note at the Bottom of p. 67. St. *Jerom's* own Sentiments upon the Citation before us are, that St. *Matthew* let the Citation from *Micah* stand in the Gospel, merely to expose the Negligence of the Priests and Scribes in reading the Divine Scriptures. After which he adds, *Sunt autem qui afferunt in omnibus pene Testimoniiis, quæ de veteri Testamento sumuntur, istiusmodi esse Errarem ut aut Ordo mutetur, aut Verba & interdum sensus quoque ipse di-*

* Vid. Nold. Partic. p. 243.

versus fit, vel Apostolis vel Evangelistis non ex libro carpentibus Testimonia, sed Memoriæ credentibus quæ nonnunquam fallitū. What therefore St. *Jerom* is charged with freely owning, he appears not to have owned at all, but expressly to deliver, as the Opinion of others, opposed to his own by an adversative Particle. Is this citing out of the Fathers fairly, or dealing like one who aims sincerely at the Truth? If the latter of these be really the Case, I would advise our Author to pursue some other Game; for when he aims at the Truth, he proves one of the worst Marksmen that ever shot.

As to the other Method of misapplying Prophecies in the *Old Testament* charged upon our Evangelist in the Objection, viz. forced Construction, and warping them to a Sense quite foreign to the Prophets true Meaning, to prove thence that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, we desire it may be observed: First, That though St. *Matthew* frequently affirms the Prophecies in the *Old Testament* to have been fulfilled in *Jesus*, yet he never directly makes them Arguments for his being the *Messiah*. As therefore he is not chargeable with bad or illogical Proof, where he does not argue at all: So it may hence be presumed, that he used no forced Construction or Warping to serve a Point, not directly in view. And this, upon a fair Inquiry, I am persuaded will appear true in Fact. Most of the Prophecies applied by our Evangelist to the things of *Jesus*, were literally, and some of them miraculously fulfilled in him; and of them all it may be justly said, that they are applicable to him without any Re-

pugnancy from the Words wherein they are expressed. The Prophets of the *Old Testament* were not the Authors of their own Predictions, but the Holy Ghost. His meaning therefore, not that of the Prophets, is the Rule whereby we are to judge whether the Prophecies in the Gospel of St. *Mattbew* are rightly applied or no. But it is possible in the Nature of Things, that Prophecies, besides their primary and apparent Intention, may have a further Regard to some more distant Event. Admitting therefore that some Prophecies, applied by our Evangelist to *Jesus*, had an obvious relation to some one else, it does not follow, that to affirm they were fulfilled in another distinct Event, is to warp them to a Sense altogether foreign to the Holy Ghost's true Meaning; unless we could be sure that the Holy Ghost had but one Intendment in those Prophecies, which no one can be satisfied in, without Inspiration. Till then the Unbelievers are absurd enough to lay claim to Inspiration, they can have no certain Grounds for charging St. *Mattbew* with Misapplication of any *Old Testament* Prophecies to the Person of *Jesus*. All they can pretend is, that some Predictions in his Gospel are said to be verified in *Jesus*, which, without Revelation, could not surely be affirmed. But this we grant to be true, and see no hurt in supposing that sometimes Passages are applied to *Jesus* by the sacred Writers, not upon the Principles of Criticism, or of mystical Theology, but like other preternatural Truths, upon the mere Strength of their inspired Characters. If therefore the Adversaries to St. *Mattbew*'s Gospel will argue against it

it from the Topick of Prophecies misapplied, they must beg the Question concerning his particular Inspiration. For all they can say with Truth against the Genuineness and Divine Authority of that Gospel is, that the Writer, in some Instances, applies Prophecies in such a Sense, as cannot be ascertain'd without Inspiration. Since then mystical Theology and the Art of allegorizing the sacred Scriptures are out of the present Question ; and St. *Matthew* appears to have practised nothing in his Citations but what very well comported with an illiterate Christian of the Apostolick Age, our Author's conjecture, that the Gospel, which goes by the Name of St. *Matthew*, was not written by him, but by some Hellenistical Convert Jew, is quite out of Doors. I shall therefore dismiss the present Objection, after I have considered the Reason given, p. 68. why this Gospel could not be calculated for the Use of the Jews, *viz.* because they were never wont to apply any of the Prophecies quoted in this Gospel to their expected *Messiah*. Now it cannot be expected, that the contrary to this should be made out from very many Instances, since the main of these Prophecies relate to the Sufferings of our Lord ; which we cannot suppose the Jews should have applied to the temporal and triumphant *Messiah* expected by them : But some Examples may be found of Prophecies quoted in the Gospel of St. *Matthew* and applied to *Jesus*, which the Jews also were wont to apply to their expected *Messiah*, notwithstanding the contrary and confident Assertion of the *Dissertation-Writer*. Now the Truth of this Question must be tried

tried from the oldest and most authentick Jewish Expositions on the Prophets. Of which kind is the Chaldee Paraphrase of Jonathan, which is justly esteemed as old as our Saviour's Days. But there we find at least two of the Prophecies applied in St. Matthew's Gospel to Jesus, explained likewise of the Jews expected Messiah, viz. Micah v. 2. cited Mat. ii. 6. and Esai. xlvi. 1. cited Mat. xii. 17, & seq. In a Word, as there are no internal Marks in the Gospel before us, which indicate the Writer to have been originally either a Gentile, or an Hellenistick Jew; so there are undoubted Proofs in it, that he must have been an Hebrew of the Hebrews. For no Christians but of this sort understood the Hebrew Original; all others reading the Old Testament according to the Version of the Seventy. But the Author of the Gospel in dispute sometimes cites Passages from the Old Testament, not as they stand in the Greek, but according to the Hebrew Copies. Thus for Instance, ch. ii. 15. the Evangelist cites Hos. xi. 1. exactly as the Hebrew Bible has it, between which and the Seventy there are two considerable Variations. And now having exhausted his own Stock of Cavils, our Author takes up with some stale ones, advanced by the Author of Literal Scheme, which have received a full and particular Answer by a great and learned Prelate of our Church. His Pretence is, p. 69. that in the Opinion of Friends as well as Foes, the Objections require an Answer more solemn and à propos, than any has yet been given them. But for my part, if so poor a Testimony as mine would be of any Weight, I could freely declare that my

Lord

Lord Bishop of *Coventry* and *Lichfield*, now of *Durham*, has answered Mr. *Collins's* Cavils against the second Chapter of St. *Matthew*, with the greatest Clearness, Learning and Judgment; and do not scruple to pronounce those Friends of Religion, who are dissatisfied with the Performance, if any such there be, (which I have so little esteem for our Author's Veracity as very much to doubt of,) unreasonable Men. But if the Enemies to this Gospel really think that Prelate's Answer so unsatisfactory, why did they not expose the Weakness of it by a set Reply? Why, in particular, does the Author of the present *Dissertation* urge the old Cavils, without exemplifying the Weakness and Impertinence of the Answers already made to them? However, since the *Dissertation* may fall into many Hands, that have never seen the Bishop's *Defence of Christianity vindicated*, I shall take the freedom to consider all those Cavils, and make such Replies to them as my own Observation, greatly assisted by my Lord of *Durham's* excellent Work, shall suggest.

Objection the Seventh, p. 70. of the *Dissertation*.

" St. *Matthew* sets out with a most surprizing
" Story of three Wise-Men coming somewhere
" from the East, led by a Star to a certain House.
" Now what Foundation is there in Nature for
" such Astrological Notions, as these Wise-Men
" were acted by; or of such a *Phænomenon* in the
" Heavens waiting upon these three Men here and
" there, and at last of all pointing down to a little

" House, whither they went, without other Instruction to go by ?"

Answer. Astrological Notions have certainly no Foundation in Nature or Reality. But, as *Grotius*, on the Place, admirably well observes, there is no Absurdity in supposing God should notify the Birth of an extraordinary Person in *Judea*, by causing a luminous Body to appear in that Quarter of the Heavens, which, according to the received Partitions of that Science, belonged to *Judæa*. New Stars or Comets, according to the same very learned Person, were generally thought to portend the Period of old Monarchies, and the Commencement of new ones. If therefore the *Magi* took the Star, which they saw in their own Country, to be of this Sort, what wonder is it that they should travel to *Jerusalem*, in quest of the illustrious Infant, whose Birth was to be the *Epocha* of a new Government. As to the *Phænomenon* in the Heavens waiting upon the Wise-Men, and pointing down to a little House, admitting it to be a real Star, the Difficulty would be insuperable. But suppose it to be only a luminous Body, which seemed in the *Magi's* Country to be in the starry Region, but afterwards moved so low before them, as to direct them in their Way from *Jerusalem* to *Bethlehem*, and there to point out the desired House, by standing directly over it ; this Account has nothing in it incredible, nothing that can disparage the History in which it is told. The only Difficulty in this Supposition was, that such a luminous Body would hardly

hardly have been called a Star. But the learned Bishop abovementioned has shewn, by many Instances, that lucid Appearances have frequently that Denomination. Insomuch that our Author himself, though loth to own it, has improved by him, and learnt without scruple to drop the Name of Star, and call what directed the *Magi* by the general Name of a *Phænomenon*; not perhaps considering, that the Story has no Difficulty, as soon as the strict Notion of a Star is no longer insisted on.

Objection the Eighth, p. 70.

" *Matthew* says, that at the News these same
" Men brought of the Messiah's being born, all
" *Jerusalem* was troubled; which cannot be true,
" for that we all know the *Jews* expected their
" *Messiah* with the utmost Desire and Impatience,
" agreeably to what *St. Luke* says, that the Ti-
" dings of Christ's Birth was matter of great
" Joy."

St. Matthew does not say, that all *Jerusalem* was troubled at the News the *Magi* brought of the *Messiah*'s being born. But having first acquainted us that *Herod* was troubled, he adds, and all *Jerusalem* with him. The Cause therefore of the general Trouble might possibly be, not the News brought by the *Magi*, so much as the Trouble which *Herod* conceived thereupon. *Herod*'s Cruelty, when he was under the Dominion of State-Jealousy, was well known to the City of *Jerusalem*; which therefore could not be otherwise than troubled, for fear he should break out into some bloody Outrage. The Birth therefore of *Messiah* being an Incident, that

only gave them the Prospect of a future and remote Deliverance, might not at first prove a sufficient Counter-balance to their present just Fears. Secondly, Admitting the Evangelist's meaning to be, that the *Magi's* Intelligence put all *Jerusalem* in Trouble, it does not follow, that their Trouble arose from their belief of that Intelligence. Possibly, as much as they desired and expected that Event, they might not credit the News of *Messiah's* Birth, when built on so feeble a Foundation as the Science of *Astrology*, to which the Principles of *Judaism* gave them some Aversion. It may be they thought, at first hearing, the whole to be only a Farce contrived to mock their eager Expectations, or a Stratagem of *Herod's*, to give himself a handle for fresh Barbarities. These and many other Causes, may be assigned for all *Jerusalem's* being in trouble, at the first Tidings of *Messiah's* Birth from the *Magi*, not only consistent with their known Desires and Expectations of that Event, but also arising from them.

Objection the Ninth, p. 70, 71.

"*Matthew*, chap. ii. ver. 6. introduces the Chief Priests and Elders as applying the Prophecy of *Micah* v. 2. to the *Messiah*, which we know the old *Jews* constantly understood some of King *Hezekiah*, and others of *Zorobabel*, whom they also deemed to have fulfilled it; and further did in Christ's own Time make it a part of his Character. *Not to know whence he was.*"

Answer. We know on the contrary, that the oldest *Jews*, whose Writings are now extant, understand

understand *Micah v. 2.* of *Messiah*. Witness the *Chaldee Targum* of *Jonathan* upon the Prophets, as old as the Birth of our Saviour. The learned *Huetius* asserts the same of the *Talmud* and another antient Book, *Dem. Evang. Prop. 7. §. 25.* If the Author of the *Dissertation* has older *Jews* than these to produce for his Ex-plication, he has injured his Argument in not producing them. That any *Jews*, ancient or modern, ever understood *Micah v. 2.* of *Heze-ziah*, was not asserted by Mr. *Collins*, who speaks only of *Zorobabel*. It is an Observation, I had like to have said an Invention, for which we are beholden to our present Author. It is true however, that the *Jews* of our Saviour's time make it a part of *Messiah's* Character, *that when he cometh no Man knoweth whence he is*. But no certain Conclusion can be drawn from hence, that *Bethlehem* was not the expected Place of *Messiah's* Birth, unless it be first made out, that the Words *whence he is* cannot possibly extend to his *immediate Parentage*, but must necessarily mean the *Place* of his *Nativity*. How-ever, thus much is evident, that if some *Jews* in our Saviour's Days made it a part of his Character, that his Birth-place should be un-known, *John vii. 27.* others as strenuously con-tended for the contrary, that it was known and pointed out in the Scripture itself to be the Town of *Bethlehem*; in all probability alluding to *Mic. v. 2.* Such an Application therefore of that Prophecy is no Disparagement on any ac-count to the Gospel of St. *Matthew*.

Objection the Tenth, p. 71.

" St. Matthew betrays Ignorance in Chronology,
 " by laying down the whole Transaction of Je-
 " sus's Birth in the Reign of Herod—When, ac-
 " cording to St. Luke, Jesus was not born till ma-
 " ny Years after Herod's Death, when Cyrenius,
 " being Governor of Syria, had laid a Tax on
 " Judea; which, 'tis certain, he could not have
 " done, had Herod, who was supreme Lord of
 " that Country, been alive. Besides, Matthew con-
 " tradicts the Vulgar Æra of Christ's Nativity,
 " which does not commence till three Years after
 " the Death of Herod."

Answer. This has been a Difficulty with the Learned long ago; and from them the Adversaries of St. Matthew's Gospel must have received full Satisfaction, though they still continue the Objection, as their manner is. They might at any time learn from Grotius, and more particularly from Dr. Hammond, that the *ἀπογραφή*, mentioned in St. Luke, was not a *Tax*, but only a *Census* or *Enrollment* of Families, which, at the Command of *Augustus*, might be made even in the Life-time of *Herod* the Great, as well as after *Judea* became a *Roman Government*. But the pleasantest of all Objections in point of Chronology, is what follows, viz. that Matthew contradicts the Vulgar Æra of Christ's Nativity. As if the learned Moderns had not done the same, i. e. Scaliger, Archbishop Usher and Petavius. He that would see this more effectually cleared, may consult Bishop Chandler's *Vindication of the Defence of Christianity*, p. 445. & seq.

Objection the Eleventh, p. 71.

The

" The Affair of the Wise-Men, the Slaughter of
 " the Infants, the Journey of *Christ* into *Ægypt*,
 " and his return thence (a train of Notorieties
 " recorded by St. *Matthew*) cannot well be recon-
 " ciled to the total Silence of St. *Luke* in relation
 " to them all."

Answer. This is an Objection at all times unreasonable. Because no Historian is supposed to mention all the Facts that happen within the Compass of his Subject. But it never is so unreasonable, as in the Writer of the *Dissertation*, who, p. 7. raises a Scruple against the four Gospels, as containing little more than a four-fold Relation of the same Facts. How shall we please this humoursome Gentleman, who is alike dissatisfied with the Evangelists, whether they relate Facts jointly or separately ?

Objection the Twelfth, p. 71.

" That horrible Fact of *Herod's* ordering all the
 " Infants of a whole Town and Neighbourhood
 " to be slain, is subject to great Difficulty; for
 " how could so extraordinary a Fact happen in
 " the World, and no Historian, sacred or pro-
 " phane, come to the Knowledge of it, save this
 " Author only ?"

That no sacred Author but St. *Matthew* came to the Knowledge of *Herod's* murdering the Infants, is more than the Objector knows or can possibly prove. Their Silence concerning it is no good Argument. St. *Matthew* wrote first; and the following Evangelists thinking perhaps the History of the *Magi*, and what followed thereupon, sufficiently related by him, might purposely forbear to set down what they knew of

of those Matters. Nor would it be any wonder, if *prophane* History had been altogether silent upon this Head, seeing we have scarce one Writer of this Sort extant, from whom we might expect to hear it, except *Josephus*. And sure a negative Argument from the Silence of a single Historian is too inconsiderable to be attended to. But after all, it appears that *Herod's* Murder of the Infants was a Fact not unknown to Heathen Historians. For from some of these *Macrobius*, in his *Saturnalia*, relates that *Augustus* was told of the *Bethlemitish* Massacre of the Infants under two Years old by *Herod*. Great pains have been taken to discredit this Testimony of *Macrobius*. Mr. *Collins* raises all the Dust he possibly could, in order to render this noble Evidence imperceptible. But the learned Bishop abovementioned has so thoroughly cleared up this Fact, that the Author of the *Dissertation* thought it his discreetest Way not to own any thing of *Macrobius'* Testimony, but with matchless Assurance bears down his Readers, that no Historian, sacred or prophane, except St. *Matthew*, ever knew any thing of the Matter. It will be in vain for this Writer to bring himself off, by alledging, that *Macrobius* belongs to neither of these Classes, because he was a Christian Writer, and probably copied it from St. *Matthew's* Gospel. For Mr. *Maffon*, in a set Tract, printed at the end of Bishop *Chandler's Vindication*, has learnedly and indeed unanswerably proved, that *Macrobius* was a zealous Pagan; and from the difference in their Accounts, that *Macrobius* did not take his out of St. *Matthew's* Gospel. Thus

Thus much for the two Sorts of Objections against St. Matthew's being the Author of the Gospel which goes by his Name.

Another Species of Cavils there is, which tends to prove, that supposing Matthew to have written the said Gospel, he was not qualified to compile a faithful History of our Lord's Life and Actions. And these we are next to lay together and to examine.

Objection the First, urged p. 18, 19, 20.

"Matthew relates many things of his Master; " which he neither heard, nor saw, directly said " or done by him ; such are Mary's Virginity, De- " livery, and the Death of Christ; as also all that " passed from our Lord's Baptism, to the Call of " Matthew to the Apostleship, and some things " afterwards, viz. Christ's Transfiguration on the " Mount, his Arraignment, the Proceedings there- " on before the Chief Priests and Pilate, with the " Facts attending his Resurrection. These things " the Evangelist must report from others : So that " one half of the Gospel we are treating of is built " upon Tradition only."

Answer. Though the Things related by Matthew, that were previous to his Call, could not * all of them proceed from his own Knowledge, yet he had undoubted Opportunities of knowing them from our Lord himself, or

* Some of our Lord's Words and Actions, previous to Matthew's Call, and recorded by him, might nevertheless proceed (as our Author oddly expresses himself) from his own Knowledge. Those, I mean, which he uttered and performed, in or near Capernaum, where Matthew's ordinary Residence was, whilst he exercised the Office of a Publican.

from the Blessed Virgin, whose Kinswoman *Mary*, the Wife of * *Alphæus*, was Mother to our Evangelist, or from the Apostles that were called before him. So also for the Transactions, at which St. *Matthew* was not personally present, after his Call to the *Apostolate*. St. *Matthew* therefore living in the time of which he wrote, being also an Eye and an Ear-witness to most of the Facts and Sayings related by him, and having Opportunities of conversing with those who could upon their own Knowledge certify the rest, is a most credible Historian; and if not half only, but the whole of St. *Matthew*'s Gospel had been built on Tradition of this Sort, it had nevertheless been worthy of Belief.

Objection the Second, p. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38.

" *Matthew* published his Gospel, according to " *Irenæus*, when *Peter* and *Paul* were at *Rome*; " which the most accurate Chronologers place in " the Year sixty-four, at soonest. For then, say " they, the Persecution began at *Rome* under *Nero*, " in which those two Apostles are supposed to have " suffered together. And forasmuch as God (say

* It is surprizing, that any Doubt should remain with learned Men, whether *Levi* and *Matthew* were the same Person or not. The History of the former's Call in St. *Mark* is so perfectly Parallel to *Mat.* ix. 9. where our Evangelist's Vocation is mentioned, that one and the same Person must be meant in both Places. *Grotius*'s Argument on the contrary, that *Levi*, said by St. *Mark* to entertain our Lord, was not *Matthew*, who left all immediately upon his Conversion, betrays strange forgetfulness. For this Circumstance is not expressly related of St. *Matthew*; but St. *Luke*, chap. v. ver. 28. directly says of *Levi*, that he left all; and yet adds in the very next Verse, that *Levi* made a great Feast for *Jesus*, in his own House.

" some Protestants) always acts by natural Means,
 " so the same Protestants conceive no Memory
 " sufficient to retain such a Number of Facts, Ser-
 " mons, Doctrines, Promises, Prophecies and cur-
 " sory Sayings of Christ so long a time, without
 " great Omision. The Gospel then of St. Mat-
 " thew was not wrote till at least sixty-four or
 " sixty-five Years after our Saviour's Nativity, and
 " above thirty Years after his Crucifixion: when
 " (notwithstanding the Assertion of the Bishop of
 " London, in his *Pastoral Letter* to the contrary)
 " Matters were not fresh in Memory; nor could
 " the Enemies to Christianity then detect the
 " Evangelist, however guilty of Falshood; be-
 " cause the sacred Writings of the New Testa-
 " ment could not be obtained by the Heathens,
 " but through Force and Stealth for above three
 " hundred Years. Those Christians, who deli-
 " vered up their Gospels to the Heathens, though
 " they did it under the utmost Threats of Tor-
 " ments and Death, yet were branded with the
 " infamous Name of *Traditores*, i. e. givers up or
 " betrayers of the Mysteries, and for which they
 " did severe Penance, and were made incapable
 " of the *Priesthood*. "

Answer. This Objection is remarkably de-
 fective, both in point of Reasoning and of Truth.
 For *Irenæus* does not say barely, that *Matthew*
 published his Gospel, when *Peter* and *Paul*
 were at *Rome*; but that he did this whilst
 those Apostles preached there and laid the
 Foundation of the Church, which doubtless
 was the first Work they went upon. And as
Paul, the last Comer, arrived there, according

to Bishop Pearson, in February, Anno 61. so it is probable St. Matthew's Gospel was written that very Year, or at latest the Year after, i. e. Anno 62. But our Author is positive, the most accurate Chronologers place the time that these Apostles were at *Rome*, in the Year 64 at soonest. For which he gives a most admirable Reason; that then the Persecution, under *Nero*, began at *Rome*, in which those two Apostles suffered together. As if those Apostles could not haye been at *Rome* some Years before the beginning of *Nero*'s Persecution, and yet suffer together some time in that Persecution. What Shuffling is here to gain the small Advantage of two or three Years in the late Publication of St. Matthew's Gospel? But supposing, as our Author would have it, that this Gospel was not compiled till thirty-one Years after our Lord's Crucifixion; why then he has Protestants ready to vouch, that no Memory would be sufficient to retain all the Particulars of which that Gospel ought to consist, without great Omission. If to this it should be replied, that besides his bare Memory, he had the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, to bring all necessary Particulars to his remembrance, he makes the same Protestants anticipate this, by laying it down as a *Maxim*, that God acts always by natural means, i. e. he never works Miracles, never breaks in upon Nature. But who are these *Protestants*, that argue so utterly unlike reasonable Men or Christians? As to this, our Author desires to be excused, *Knaves* may forge Testimonies, but none, save *Fools*, will detect

detect themselves, by referring to Places, where it will be in vain to look for them. But if any Writer, *Protestant* or *Papist*, has said something like this, it will be a sufficient Vindication of St. Matthew from this Objection, to observe, that it proceeds upon a Supposition utterly false, *viz.* That this Evangelist, from the time of our Lord's Ascension, to the Publication of his Gospel, had never recollect'd the Particulars of our Lord's History; whereas, during that Interval, it was his daily Work to preach and declare these Things. An ordinary Memory therefore, exercised by perpetual Repetition of the Gospel History, might retain it all for ever so great a Number of Years. So that St. Matthew, though writing above thirty Years after our Lord's crucifixion, was not even naturally the worse qualified to compile his History. Nor does this Distance of Time between the Events of the Gospel and their being committed to writing by St. Matthew, at all affect my Lord of London's Assertion, *That the Gospels were written and published while the Matters were fresh in Memory, and while many Persons were living who wanted not Inclination to detect them, if they could have been convicted of Falshood,* so far as it relates to our Evangelist, though the *Dissertation* Writer opposes the Fact and the Assertion, as inconsistent with each other. We know that in all Times and Countries, there are thousands of Persons living, who perfectly remember the State of Things for more than 30 or 40 Years past, and who, upon the mere strength of their Memories,

ries, could detect any false relation of publick Matters, within that Compass of Time. Nay, if we make his Lordship accountable for his Position in the most rigorous Sense, and extend it to the Time, when the last of the four Gospels, that according to St. *John* was written, even then it is likely, that many Persons were living who could have detected that Apostle, if his Gospel had contained any Falshoods. For his Gospel was composed, according to Dr. *Mill*, *An.* 97. i. e. sixty four Years after our Saviour's Decease. Those Persons therefore, who at the Age of eighteen Years, were Witnesses to the beginning of our Lord's Ministry, at the Time of St. *John*'s publishing his Gospel, would not exceed the Age of eighty five; and that many Persons, thus much advanced in Years, should be living at the same time, is no hard Supposition. Nay, six and twenty Years after this, *Quadratus*, in an Apology for the Christians presented to *Adrian* the Emperor, affirms that himself had seen very many that had been relieved by our Lord from various Calamities, and who had been raised from the Dead*. As to the last Thing advanced in this Objection, that the Heathens, whilst such Persons were living as were capable of detecting Falshoods in the Gospels, could not appeal to them for the Purpose, because they knew not the Contents of those Books, not being able to obtain them but through Force and Stealth for some hundreds of Years; this is an

* *Jerom. Catal. Script. Eccles. sub Nom. Quadrat. Euseb. H.E. l. 4. c. 3.*

Assertion directly *false* and *scandalous*, as well as impertinent. For if in fact the Heathens did come by those Books, as our Author owns they did, the Bishop's Argument for the Veracity of the Gospels from the Silence of the Heathen under such Opportunities of canvassing and examining them, remains unanswerable. But really there is no just Reason to suppose that the Enemies to Christianity laboured under any such Difficulty of obtaining the sacred Writings of the *New Testament*, as is suggested by the Author of the Dissertation. His only Pretence for it is, a Misrepresentation of a Piece of Ecclesiastical History, which, when rightly apprehended, does great Honour to the Christian Religion. It was the Custom of the Heathen Persecutors, among other Forms of abjuring and renouncing that Profession, to require that the Men of it, when subdued by Fears or by actual Tortures, should surrender their Bible to be contemptuously used and burnt. And generally speaking, such was the Zeal and Firmness of the primitive Believers, that they chose to deliver up their Lives rather than the Oracles of God. But if any saved themselves by such mean Submissions, notwithstanding the Plea from human Infirmity, they were branded for Cowardice in the Christian Warfare, and reproachfully termed *Traditores*. But in any other Case, though only that of satisfying the Curiosity of an inquisitive Heathen, we never find it was held criminal for a Disciple of Jesus, to shew or to give Copies of the *New Testament* Books. So far from this, that in quiet Times, and when they apprehended no ill Usage to the sacred

sacred Writings, the Christians were forward to thrust them into the Hands of the *Gentiles*, in order to their Conversion. Thus *Eusebius*, speaking of the Successors to the Apostles, who lived early in the second Century says, " That leaving " their native Places they discharged the Office " of Evangelists, being ambitious to preach *Christ*, " and to deliver the Book of the Divine Gos- " pels to such as had never yet heard the Word " of Faith." *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. 3. c. 37.* Nor does the Historian blame them for Indiscretion, on this Score, but highly commends them for so doing. In a Word, the Apologists for Christianity in the second and third Centuries freely communicated to the Heathen Powers the summary Sense of the Gospels; and neither *Celsus* nor *Porphyry* ever reproached their believing Adversaries with any Conduct like this, but, on the contrary, pretended to a thorough Knowledge of the Sacred Writings. The Misrepresentation therefore of so known a Case must be charged on our Author, as done with a wilful Design of misleading ignorant and unwary Readers into an Opinion, that Christianity was a Cause, that would not bear Examination, and therefore its original Records were industriously concealed till it was too late to detect the Falsifications therein.

Objection the third urged, p. 52.

" Ecclesiastical Writers agree that the Original itself of St. *Matthew's* Gospel was sometime or other corrupted; which amounts even to a Demonstration, that the first Converts (the Corruptors) never believed it of Divine Inspiration; but knew it rather to have been

" compiled

“ compiled by one among themselves, not only
 “ liable to mistake; but who had actually mis-
 “ taken in those Facts or Points, in which they
 “ so readily and without scruple made Alterati-
 “ ons; for what else could determine those Chri-
 “ stians to alter and adulterate a Gospel, which
 “ was wrote to oblige themselves by an inspi-
 “ red Apostle too, and a Friend of their owne
 “ chooing.

Answer. The Original of St. Matthew's Gos-
 pel might at some time be corrupted; and yet it
 will not follow that the first Converts and Con-
 temporaries with the Apostles were the Cor-
 ruptors. Besides, Ecclesiastical Writers do not
 impute the Alterations in St. Matthew's Original
 to those very individual Converts, for whose sake
 the Evangelist wrote his Gospel, but to their Suc-
 cessors. Lastly, The Instances of Alterations,
 pretended to have been made in that Gospel,
 were no express Contradictions to any thing al-
 ready there; but generally Additions and Enlarge-
 ments only: From all which it follows. First;
 That the Jewish Converts, who retained the Ori-
 ginal of St. Matthew pure and unadulterated, be-
 lieved it was of Divine Inspiration. Secondly,
 That the Successors of these Men, who added to
 that Original; do not appear to have done it so
 much as upon a Belief that the Compiler of it
 was liable to mistake, or actually mistaken, but
 only in order to have a fuller Account of some
 things briefly related by St. Matthew, and to per-
 petuate other historical Facts, about which that
 Evangelist had been wholly silent.

And now having answered all the Cavils of the Author of the *Dissertation* against St. Matthew's being Compiler of the Gospel ascribed to him, and against his having the necessary Qualities of a faithful and well informed Historian, I proceed next to consider whatever has been said by the Author aforesaid, to prove that this Gospel, by whomsoever it was written, has not been faithfully transmitted to us.

Objection the first, p. 48.

" The Antients unanimously affirm that the
 " Apostle *Matthew* composed his Gospel in *He-
 brew*; whereas the Gospel we now make use
 " of, according to some Moderns of great Name,
 " cannot be the same, but another whose Ori-
 " ginal it seems was *Greek*. So that we have lost
 " St. *Matthew*'s *Hebrew* Gospel, and a *Greek* one
 " is transmitted to us in its stead, of whose Au-
 " thority we know nothing."

Answer. Those Moderns of great Name, who affirm the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, now in use, to have been originally *Greek*, suppose the Antients to have been mistaken in declaring that the Apostle *Matthew* composed his Gospel in *Hebrew*. But which Opinion soever we espouse, the faithful Transmission of that Gospel is not thereby brought in Question. For the Fathers, whether right or wrong in their Persuasion about the original Language of the Gospel, are nevertheless unanimous that their presumed *Greek* Version contained the same Doctrines and Facts with St. *Matthew*'s *Hebrew*. And if we have the true History of our Lord transmitted to us, as
 the

the Apostle at first wrote it, his Gospel is to all Intents and Purposes of Christianity faithfully transmitted to us, be it Version, or be it Original, which we now have in our Hands. So that at all Adventures, we have the Gospel of St. Matthew in Sense and Substance the same as he delivered it. And to this we have the Evidence of all Antiquity. No one Catholick Christian ever doubted but that his Copy of St. Matthew's Gospel was in the main faithful and genuine. Nay the earliest Hereticks never seem to have denied that any of the Gospels were the Works of those, whose Names are prefixed to them, or that they had been untruly handed down in the received Exemplars. What they chiefly pretended, as we learn from *Irenæus* was, *That the Apostles preached before they had a perfect Knowledge*, and they boasted themselves to be the *Correctors of the Apostles*, l. 3. c. 1. They denied that the Truth could be learned from the Scriptures, by any one who was a Stranger to Tradition; meaning thereby not the written and constant Judgment of the Apostolical Churches, but a certain Oral Cabbala, of which themselves alone were the Depositaries. They insisted that this sort of Tradition, and not the written Scriptures, contained the Truth. St. Paul, they said, meant this by the Wisdom he spake among those that were perfect, and each Man among them dignified his own Whims with the Title of Wisdom in this Sense. They held themselves to be wiser than the Elders, or even the Apostles, and that they alone had found out the sincere Truth, whilst the Apostles blended the Things of

the Law with the Doctrines of our Saviour; Nay, that not only the Apostles but our Lord himself, sometimes speake from the Demiurgus, sometimes from the Mediety, and sometimes again from the Symmity; but, that they (the Hereticks) did undoubtedly, purely and sincerely know the sudden Mystery, Iren. l. 3, c. 2. Now let the whole World judge if these Hereticks, most of whom lived in the very next Succession to the Apostles, would have had recourse to such monstrous Principles as these, to get rid of the Scripture Authorities, if they had been able to have objected to the Genuineness of the *New Testament* Books, and especially of the Gospels. In particular had these Men known (as know they must the Truth of these Things,) that the *Greek Gospel* of St. *Matthew*, then in the Hands of the Church, had been an unfaithful Version or Copy of that Evangelist's Original; or had they but suspected thus much, how easy had it been to reject the Authority of that Book, without the immodest Pretence of correcting him and his Brother Apostles? This therefore, though a negative Evidence in favour of the Body of Gospels received in the Church, is little less than a Demonstration of their being faithful Transcripts from their inspired Originals.

Objection the second, p. 49, 50, 51.

" The Fathers tell us that the *Nazarenes* began to stuff the original *Hebrew Gospel* of St. *Matthew* very soon with their own Inventions, and that the *Ebionite* Gospel too (another Branch of it) was still more corrupt. This

is the Voice of all Antiquity. The faithful Transmission which the *Pastoral Letter* contends for (if we respect *Matthew's Gospel* only) can never be made fairly to appear from Ecclesiastical History only, it being impossible, in the Nature of the Thing, admitting, as that does, the Original of it to have been corrupted. If you will assert the *Hebrew* Original remained entire, till such time as a Transcript, or else our present Version was made from it, yet how shall that appear? No one *Gentile* Father having ever seen or pretended to have seen *Matthew's Original*. *Papias*, who lived after the Commencement of the second Age, says, that *Matthew* having wrote his Gospel in *Hebrew*, every one interpreted it as he was able. Upon which Dr. *Whitby* observes, that *Papias* knew nothing of any authentick Version of *Matthew's Gospel*, approved by the Apostles, and looked upon in his Time as canonical, by the Church. But if the *Gentile* Church had obtained no one approved Version so late as after the beginning of the second Century (before which time it is universally allowed the *Nazarenes* had corrupted their Original) from whose Hands, or by what Means or Testimony could the Church afterwards procure it, except only by a new Revelation."

Answer. The Principles, upon which any one of the Fathers charge the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* with corrupting the original *Hebrew* Gospel of St. *Matthew*, suppose the Greek of that Gospel to be a faithful Transmission; because they knew that

that Gospel, as it was received and read in their Churches, to be a faithful Transcript; therefore they judged from the Disagreement between it, and the *Hebrew* Copies among the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, that these last must have added to and otherwise corrupted that Original. This therefore being the entire Grounds, on which it was ever pretended that St. *Matthew's* original *Hebrew* had been corrupted, how disingenuous is it in the Author of the *Dissertation*, to make that an Argument against the faithful Transmission of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, as we now have it, which, upon Enquiry, has no just Foundation, without supposing the Truth of that which it is brought to destroy? In a Word, the State of the Case stands thus. If *Matthew's* Gospel has been honestly handed down to us, we have in this respect all we want; but if the justness of its Transmission be at all doubtful, it can never be made appear, that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* corrupted the *Hebrew* Gospel at all; and consequently all the Stir made by our Author concerning this supposed Corruption, establishes what it was intended to subvert. Besides, the Fact itself, that the *Nazarenes* were originally the first Christian Converts*, and that they ever were possessed of the original *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, is very much and very justly questioned by learned Men. This is so far from being the Voice of all Antiquity, as the Author of the *Dissertation* affirms, that almost four en-

* See Dr. *Mangey's Answer to Toland's Nazarenus.*

tire Centuries passed without the least mention of any such Christian Sect, as that of the *Nazarenes*, or of the *Hebrew Gospel* of St. *Matthew* being extant, either among them or the *Ebionites*. *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* are the first Ecclesiastical Writers that speak of the *Nazarenes*, and of their using the authentick *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*. And yet all the Passages produced by either of them differ from that Gospel as we now have it. Nor do they pretend that they had either *History* or *Tradition* for calling the *Nazarene* Gospel the original *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*. It seems to have been only the Judgment of their own Times, founded perhaps on no better a Reason, than that given by *Epiphanius*, who thinks the *Hebrew* Gospel of the *Ebionites* must be that of St. *Matthew*, because St. *Matthew* alone made a Publication of the Gospel in the *Hebrew* Language and Character. The same Argument held for the Gospel of the *Nazarenes*, though in many respects different from that of the *Ebionites*, and must have held for twenty other *Hebrew* Gospels, if so many had then been extant, though disagreeing ever so much among themselves. Another Reason why we ought not too hastily to give into the Accounts of *Epiphanius* and *Jerom*, when they tell us that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* used the authentick *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*, is that those Sects themselves assigned no such Title to their own Gospels. The *Ebionites* of old, *eo Evangelio quod est secundum Matthæum solo utebantur*, says *Irenæus*, l. 3. c. 11. But this was spoken of the pure and uninterpolated Gospel of that

Name,

Name, which was the only Gospel of those received in the Church, which the *Ebionites* used. But besides this they had another with the Title of the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, or according to the twelve *Apostles*, the same which *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* afterwards reported to be the authentick *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*, and which in the intermediate Times had been quoted by *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen* and *Eusebius*, as an *Apocryphal* Gospel. And this Gospel *Epiphanius* himself tells us the *Ebionites* called, not the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, but the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, *Hær.* 30 *. So also St. *Jerom*, in many Places of his Works, speaking of the *Nazarene* Gospel, calls it the Gospel entitled, according to the *Hebrews*, and once according to the *Apostles*, but never makes the Gospel of St. *Matthew* to have been its current Title, among the Sect to which it belonged. And indeed the internal Character of the *Ebionite* Gospel makes it absurd to ascribe it to St. *Matthew*, or to any other particular Apostle; for accord-

* There is indeed a Passage in *Epiphanius*, in which, as Mr. Jones has rendered it (*New and Full Method of settling Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, Vol. 1. p. 337.) that Father is made to affirm that the *Ebionites* called their Gospel, the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*. But that learned Gentleman has mis-translated *Epiphanius*, whose Words are: Ἐν τῷ γοῦ παρὰ αὐτοῖς ἐνεγράπιν, κατὰ Ματθαῖον λεγομένων, which Words ought to be rendered thus: In the Gospel that is among them, which is called the Gospel according to *Matthew*. But every one sees that *Epiphanius* does not say that the Gospel of the *Ebionites* was termed by themselves, the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*. Indeed the contrary to this appears before we get to the End of this very Sentence; in which he expressly tells us, Ἐβραικὸν δὲ τοῦτο καλοῦσιν. The *Ebionites* call this the *Hebrew* Gospel, i. e. according to the *Hebrews*.

ing to the Accounts given of it by *Epiphanius*, it speaks in the Name of no single Person, but of the twelve Apostles, saying, *There was a certain Man, named Jesus, about thirty Years old, who chose us*: After which immediately follows a pretended Speech of *Jesus's*, in which he declares his Choice of the twelve Apostles by Name. This was what gave the *Ebionitish Gospel* the Title of the *Gospel according to the twelve Apostles*, and as the *Nazarene Gospel* has the very same Title in St. *Jerom's Works*, so no doubt but the same Paragraph was found there also. Upon the whole then it appears, that the *Hebrew authentick Gospel* found among the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, and perpetually opposed by the Author of the *Dissertation*, to the present *Greek* of that Evangelist, is a Notion extremely uncertain, if not a direct Chimæra, and upon no Account worthy of that Stress, which the late and present Advocates for Infidelity lay upon it. After this who can help smiling to see our Author drawing up formal Arguments for the *Hebrews* in Defence of their *Authenticum Matthæi*, against the *Gentiles* and their *Greek Version* of that Evangelist, p. 47. Arguments that never did nor ever could possibly be offered? Or to observe him, p. 51. laying out Matters between the *Nazarenes* and the *Gentile Christians*, merely on the Foot of Invention. But to return. Since it does not appear certain, or even probable, that the original *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew* was ever corrupted, there is no Reason to distrust the faithful Transmission of his present *Greek Gospel*, supposing it to be a Version. Further, since the Original of St. *Matthew*,

admitting it to be *Hebrew*, was always pure, it matters not by whom the *Greek Version* was made, nor how or by whom it was *authenticated*. The Church of Christ, whose Concern it was to see that Work faithfully done, appears to have been thoroughly satisfied; and neither Hereticks nor *Gentile Unbelievers* have objected against the Fidelity of the Translation, nor its just and universal Reception. We therefore, at this Distance of Time, have no Reason to be uneasy, but to admit the Faithfulness of that Act, as we do of other ancient ones, to which no just Exception can otherwise be made, though we have not the precise History and Circumstances of its *Verification*. As to the present *Greek* of St. *Matthew*, if it be a Tranlation, we have great Reason to believe, that it is the same with that which the Church received in the Days of the Apostles themselves. For in the Writings of the first Century, and the very Beginning of the second, we have Quotations from the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, which though not exact and literal, yet often agree with the present *Greek* in peculiar Turns of Expression *. So that in a very few Years after the Publication of St. *Matthew's* Gofpel, and before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, we have Reason to think that his present *Greek* Gospel, be it Original or be it a Version,

* Whoever wants Satisfaction in this Particular, may consult Mr. *Jones's New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, Vol. 3. c. 2. where he will find Instances of this kind, by comparing the Citations out of St. *Matthew* there collected from *Barnabas*, *Clemens Romanus*, *Ignatius* and *Polycarp* with the present *Greek Text*.

was received both in the Eastern and Western Churches. The Testimony of *Papias* does not weaken this Conclusion. For he does not say, that in his own Time each interpreted the *Hebrew* Gospel of St. *Matthew* as he was able. For he speaks in the Time past, the very Time when St. *Matthew* published his *Hebrew* Gospel. And then indeed, till an authentick Version was prepared, every one was to come at the Evangelist's meaning, in the best Manner he could. But this does not hinder, but that in a little time, such a Version might be made which put an End to all private Interpretation, and was received by the *Gentile* Christians into their Canon of Scripture, and has ever since continued to be a part of that Canon.

Objection the Third, p. 52.

" The Gospel of St. *Matthew*, now in our
 " Hands and the *Nazarene*, did differ very ma-
 " terially from each other. But the Question
 " still remains, whether the Additions in the
 " latter are really Interpolations or rather part
 " of the Original Gospel ? Or whether those first
 " Converts and Cotemporaries with the Apostles,
 " if they did add or interpolate, had not good
 " Reason and Authority for so doing ? Many
 " learned Men suppose they had; and then it
 " will follow, supposing both Gospels had the
 " same Original, that our present Copies are
 " retrenched or not so faithfully transmitted
 " as they ought to have been, p. 53. That
 " they corrupted it at all, seems a mere Slander
 " of the *Gentile* Fathers without Foundation, in
 " order to magnify their own Gospel. In regard

" great Encomiums are given the *Nazarene* Gosp-
" pel, as well by those who have thought it a
" distinct Original, as by those who have con-
" ceived it of the same Origin with our present
" Gospel."

Answer. That our present *Greek* Gospel differs from the *Nazarene* one, we readily admit. They are so different as scarce to have anything the same, if we may judge by the Fragments of the latter now remaining. And I hope I have made it appear, that there was probably as little Agreement between the Original *Hebrew* of St. *Matthew*, and that used by the *Nazarenes*. Since therefore they were in all likelihood distinct Gospels, our present Copies are not to be condemned for unfaithful Transmission, because they do not contain what was never in their Original, but always in a separate Gospel. But suppose for once, that the *Nazarene* Gospel and ours had one Original, St. *Matthew's* Autograph; and that those who added what is now in the *Nazarene* Gospel, had Reason and Authority for so doing, it is still monstrous Reasoning in the Author of the *Dissertation*, thence to argue that our present Copies are retrenched or not so faithfully transmitted as they ought to have been, for no other Reason, but because they are free from such Interpolations. For Additions however justifiable or expedient, are still distinct from the Original; and to complain that Copies, which want such Additions, are retrenched or unfaithfully transmitted, is *filly*, as well as *unjust*. But indeed the Additions, as our Author calls them, or rather the Fragments of the

Nazarene Gospel, are utterly void both of Reason and Authority. The Accounts given of the *Nazarene* and *Ebionite Gospels* by *Epiphanius* prove, that the *Nazarene* had all that *Ebion's* *Gospel* had and more. But the *Ebionite Gospel*, as Mr. *Jones* in his first Volume of *New and full Method*, p. 376. & sequ. has fairly proved, contains some things notoriously false, others that are impious, and others again that are weak and silly. To what he has observed, I would only add an Instance of an egregious *Anachronism*. Every one knows, that the Birth of our Lord happened but two or three Years before the Death of *Herod the Great*; and our Author, as well as his Predecessors in Infidelity, quarrel with St. *Matthew*, for placing Christ's Nativity too high, by eleven Years. But the *Ebionite* and probably the *Nazarene Gospel*, places not only his Birth, but his Baptism at thirty Years of Age, within the Compass of the same *Herod's Reign*. For their *Gospel*, according to *Epiphanius*, began thus: *It came to pass in the Days of Herod, King of Judæa, that John came baptizing, &c.* Whereas by all the Accounts, both of sacred and prophane History, *Pilate* was then Governor of *Judæa*, and no one of the Name of *Herod* had been King of that Country since *Herod the Great*, who had then been dead six or seven and twenty Years. Such inconsistent Creatures are the Enemies of Religion. They strain at a Gnat in a *Canonical Gospel*, but can swallow a Camel in favour of an *Apocryphal one*.

Objection the Fourth. p. 54, 55.

" If the Gospel we now have according to St. Matthew, was wrote originally in *Greek*, it manifestly stands upon a very uncertain Foundation. For the Original *Greek* was never so much as heard of, referred to, or mentioned by any one Christian Writer, as then existing any where ; but the immediate *Hebrew* Translation also of that *Greek* hath been misling ever since St. *Jerom's* Time, or very soon after, i. e. above thirteen hundred Years. So that now what the *English* Church makes use of and builds her Faith upon, and which is called particularly in the Front of our Testament, a Translation out of the Original *Greek*, is in truth no other than what is generally reputed by our present learned Clergy —— A very faulty Translation, from a modern *Greek* Edition of a bad *Greek* Translation, out of the lost *Hebrew* Translation, from a *Greek* Original, that was never seen."

Answer. If the Gospel we now have according to St. Matthew, was wrote originally in *Greek*, the Christian Writers all along had that Original, tho' most of them mistook it for a Version. The immediate *Hebrew* Translation of that *Greek* is no part of the Question, with those who suppose St. Matthew to have wrote originally in *Greek*. For they insist upon it, that his Original, without passing through Translators Hands, hath come down, in the main, pure and unmixt into our present Copies. The Sense therefore of our *English* Clergy, who are in these Sentiments,

Sentiments, concerning the authorised Translation of St. Matthew's Gospel in our Testaments, is shamefully stated by the Author of the *Dissertation*. For the generality of them repute it to be a faithful and in the main a just Version from an Edition, that was but thirty Years later than the first of the Kind that ever the World saw, of Copies honestly transmitted from St. Matthew's Original *Greek*, which all the Christian World saw and used from the Beginning, tho' for the most part misapprehending it to be a Version from an *Hebrew* Original of that Apostle's. On the other hand, those learned *English* Clergy, who think the Tradition for St. Matthew's having originally wrote his Gospel in *Hebrew* too strong to be resisted, believe that the *Greek* Version, which we now follow, was made and received in the very Apostolical Age, and has been with sufficient Faithfulness transmitted to our own Times, and with very good though not unerring Judgment, hath been published in the printed Edition of *Robert Stephens*, and hath been thence translated into *English*, under the Direction of Authority, so well, as that illiterate *English* Christians may safely build their Faith upon it, as far as it goes. But both Sides are agreed, that our present *Greek* Gospel of St. Matthew is genuine and canonical, either a complete Original in itself, or derived from that genuine *Hebrew* of that Evangelist, without being retrenched or epitomized either in transcribing or translating. The Impugners of that Gospel, who suggest the contrary, do it on Principles that appear upon examination, to be precarious,

precious, if not directly false. So that the Right Reverend Author of the *Pastoral Letter*, knowing these things, had no reason to trouble or perplex the plain People of his Diocese with Questions, not necessary to the Point in View. It was not his business to regard those impertinent Considerations, on which the Unbelievers, partly through Ignorance, partly through Malice, proceed to disturb the religious Quiet of Christians. It was sufficient to supply his People with Arguments for the faithful Transmission of Scripture, founded upon undoubted Facts, that will stand the strictest Enquiry, and defy the Sophistry of those Deceivers.

Objection the Fifth, p. 36.

" The Impugners of St. Matthew's Gospel, as
 " well as the Bishop of London, admit that after
 " Christianity was carried into almost all Parts of
 " the Roman Empire, and Copies of the New
 " Testament spread with it, and not only re-
 " mained in the Hands of Numbers of private
 " Christians, but were publickly received and
 " read in religious Assemblies, it had been impos-
 " sible for any one to add or to retrench success-
 " fully; but then this state of things could not
 " obtain till towards the End of the fourth Cen-
 " tury. Besides, what they urge with respect to
 " our present Gospel is, that, supposing it truly
 " derived from St. Matthew's Hebrew, which
 " the Learned we see very much suspect, yet
 " was it grievously adulterated in its very Ori-
 " ginal, or else abridged by its Translator,
 " whilst in private Hands. In either of which
 " Cases the few Arguments which the *Pastoral*
Letter.

" *Letter-Writer* hath brought for the faithful
" Transmission of this particular Gospel, will be
" found of no Force."

Answer. What the Author of the *Dissertation* denies could be till towards the End of the fourth Century, was real Fact early in the second. Christianity was, by that time, spread into almost all Parts of the *Roman Empire*, and Copies of the New Testament, especially of the Gospels, were spread with it *. Nay, in the very first Age †, as appears from the Citations out of this Gospel in the Epistles of *Barnabas* and *Clemens Romanus*, Greek Copies of St. *Matthew's* Gospel were spread in the extreme Parts of the *Roman Empire*; and consequently, unless it was adulterated in the very life-time of its Author, which is absurd to imagine, there was no room for any such Mischief afterwards. The Pretences concerning its early Adulteration either in the Original *Hebrew*, or in translating, from the Fragments of that Gospel given us by *Epiphanius* and *Jerom*, have been examined and refuted. The Arguments therefore urged in the *Pastoral Letter*, for the faithful Transmission of this Gospel, remain in their full force.

* See *Euseb. H. E.* l. 3. c. xxxvii. *Iren.* l. 1. c. 3.

† *Euseb.* l. 3. c. xxiv. assures us, that before St. *John* wrote his Gospel, the other three were universally dispersed; which was before the End of the first Century, and that St. *John* approved of them all. But it is highly probable, that the Copy of St. *Matthew*, which reached *Epheesus*, where St. *John* resided, was the Greek one. For Greek was the Language of that Place, and had the Gospel of St. *Matthew*, which came thither, been *Hebrew*, the *Asiatick* Christians would have desired of St. *John*, not only a new and supplemental Gospel, but a Version likewise of St. *Matthew's* Original *Hebrew*, which we do not find they did.

Objection the Sixth, p. 57.

" It has been observed by some Criticks, that
 " in St. Matthew's Gospel only, which consists
 " of about eleven hundred Verses, there are to be
 " found no less than a thousand various Readings.
 " Which, to speak the Truth, with Dr. Whitby,
 " are enough to make the Mind doubtful and a
 " little apprehensive that nothing certain can be
 " expected from a Book, where there are Al-
 " terations in every Verse, and almost in every
 " Part of every Verse."

Answer. If the Writers for Infidelity had any remains of Shame in them, they would never trouble the World any more with Dr. Whitby's Fears upon this Subject, till they had answered what the very Learned *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis* has advanced relating to this Thread-bare Cavil of various Readings : For he has observed, upon a Computation of his own, twenty thousand various Readings, in a much less Book, viz. that of *Terence*, and that from half the Number of MSS. that are extant of the *New Testament*. And if it would be ridiculous, as it certainly would, to make this an Argument that the Works of that famous Dramatick Writer had been unfaithfully transmitted, what shall we say of the Sense and Honesty of our unbelieving Adversaries, who perpetually urge this against the sacred Writings. The same Gentleman affirms that *Tibullus*, in a late Edition, has as many various *Lections* as *Lines*. But to call these Alterations, or to suppose them any discredit to an ancient Book, betrays either great *Ignorance* or very great *Malice*.

Objection

Objection the Seventh, p. 57, 58.

" As the Authors of all prophane Writings of
 " any Note are and have ever been universally
 " assented to without Dispute, which is far
 " from being the Case of the Author here exa-
 " mined ; so neither are there any such plain
 " and strong Testimonies for the unfaithful
 " Transmission of any of those Writings, as
 " there are of this Gospel ; and on these two
 " Accounts, Hereticks may fairly reject it as
 " Apocryphal, without involving themselves in
 " the Absurdity of rejecting all ancient Writings
 " whatever. Besides, it never was the Interest
 " of any Set of Men so egregiously to corrupt
 " the prophane Authors in support of private
 " Opinions."

Answer. The Writer of the *Dissertation* speaks too adventurously (as indeed nothing makes Men more confident than Ignorance) when he affirms, that the Authors of all prophane Writings, of any *Note*, are and have ever been universally assented to without dispute. I suppose he will not dispute, but that *Cæsar's* Commentaries are Writings of *Note*. And yet *Gerard Vossius**, if applied to, would have instructed him, that more than one have denied the seven Books *De Bello Gallico*, to be *Cæsar's*. (One of these ascribed it to *Suetonius*) and that the three Books *De Bello Civili*, are denied to be his by *Floridus Sabinus*. Again, it may be our Author will be good-natured enough to allow, that *Cornelius Nepos* is a Writer of *Note*.

* De Histor. Lat. l. i. c. xiii.

And yet the Learned know, that, upon the first Revival of Learning, his Book *De Vita & Moribus excellentium Græciæ Imperatorum*, generally passed for the Work of *Æmilius Probus*, a Librarian or Copist, that lived in the Reign of *Theodosius*. As to the next Particular in the Objection, that relating to the plain and strong Testimonies of the unfaithful Transmission of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, we know of no such Things; nor has he produced one valuable Author who has expressly affirmed, that our Copies of St. *Matthew's* Gospel differ, in any material Point, from the Original of that Evangelist. Upon neither therefore of these two Accounts, can any one reject that Gospel as Apocryphal, without involving himself in the Absurdity of rejecting all antient Writings whatever. Nor, lastly, will any Difference arise in this respect from the Consideration, that it was never the Interest of any Set of Men so egregiously to corrupt other Writings in support of private Opinions, as it was of the primitive Christians, to corrupt this Gospel of St. *Matthew*. For how does it appear, that the Christians, at the latter End of the first Century, or Beginning of the second, had any Interest of this Kind to serve? And till this be proved, they will stand on the same Footing with those Antients, through whose Hands other Writings have passed, nor can the faithfulness of Transmission be more questionable in one Case than in the other. Besides, if those Christians had such Interests to serve, they must have known, that this could not effectually be done by corrupting any of the written Gospels. For before the general Dispersion of

those

those Gospels, the Substance of them was by daily preaching strongly imprinted in the Minds of all Christians. So that no written Gospels, whatever Names they bore, would have obtained Credit, if in any respect contrary to the Analogy of that Faith and of those Doctrines which were uniformly received throughout the Christian World.

Objection the eighth, p. 72.

" That which hath occasioned the most lasting Disputes among the Ancients, and created " the greatest Suspicion in sober minded and judicious Men of the Genuineness of this second, as also of the first Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel is this, that neither of them were " to be found either in the Nazarene or Ebionite " Gospel, which was undoubtedly the ancient " Hebrew of the holy Apostle.

Answer. That any of the Ancients ever disputed the Genuineness of the first or second Chapters of St. Matthew, because they were wanting in the Nazarene and Ebionite Gospel, is affirmed by our Author, without any Evidence, and I verily think is false. Besides, though the Ebionite Gospel wanted both those Chapters, it does not appear that the Nazarene Gospel wanted either; and some learned Moderns think it contained both. Epiphanius speaks doubtfully of this Matter, and Jerom is altogether silent: But had those Gospels been equally defective herein, it ought to create no Suspicion in any sober minded or judicious Man of the Genuineness of those Chapters; because, to say the least, it is very doubtful whether either the Nazarene or Ebionite Gospel were the ancient Hebrew of St. Matthew, though

though the Author of the *Dissertation* lays it down for an undoubted Truth. Besides, as to the first of these Chapters, we have unquestionable Evidence, that it made a part of St. Matthew's Gospel, as early as the latter End of the first Century. For then *Cerinthus* argued from the Genealogy of that Chapter, that *Christ* was a mere Man, and born of human Parents, as other Men are, as our Author himself owns, p. 66.

Objection the ninth, p 72.

" No one of the old Manuscripts of the Gospel according to St. *Mark* take any Notice of the first or second Chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, though most of the Divines antient and modern conceive St. *Mark*'s Gospel to be but an *Epitome* of *Mattbeu*'s.

Answer. Of the Ancients, St. *Austin*, I think, is the only one, who supposes that St. *Mark*'s Gospel was an *Epitome* of St. *Mattbeu*, and many modern Divines have not only conceived but proved the direct contrary; particularly Father *Simon*, whose Opinions have great Weight with our Author, on other Occasions, in his *Critical History of the New Testament*, Part I. Ch. 10. well observes, that St. *Mark* cannot pass for a simple Abbreviator of St. *Mattbeu*, because he sometimes delivers Matters more at large than St. *Mattbeu* does; particularly *Mark* xii. 28. the Evangelist takes up seven long Verses in relating our Lord's Conversation with the *Scribe*, who asked him, *which is the first Commandment of all?* whereas St. *Mattbeu* gives us that whole Transaction in six short Verses, ch. xxii. Again; sometimes St. *Mark* relates Things in a different

Order

Order from what St. *Matthew* had done, directly contrary to the Practice of mere *Epitomizers*. For instance, ch. iii. 25. he records what we find in *Matt.* iv. 25. and yet in the 14th Verse of the second Chapter St. *Mark* mentions the calling of St. *Matthew*, which Event St. *Matthew* himself does not mention till ch. ix. ver. 9. Lastly, St. *Mark* makes some Observations, and mentions many Particulars, that do not at all occur in St. *Matthew*. Thus ch. xv. ver. 28. on Occasion of our Lord's Crucifixion between two Thieves, he remarks that the Scripture of *Ezai.* xv. 28. was fulfilled; whereas St. *Matthew*, speaking of the same Circumstance, ch. xxvii. 38. applies no Scripture at all. And again St. *Mark*, in his last Chapter, inserts Conversations and Facts that happened after our Lord's Resurrection, of which St. *Matthew* had not made the least mention. Since therefore it appears that St. *Mark* was not a mere *Epitomizer* of St. *Matthew*, but intended a distinct Gospel from him, nothing can be inferred from his utter Silence, about what occurs in the two first Chapters of St. *Matthew*, that those Chapters are not a genuine Part of that Gospel.

Thus I hope I have obliged the Author of the *Dissertation* with what he pretends, p. 72. "He should be glad to see, a fair Solution of the Difficulties relating to the Genuineness and Canonical Authority of the Gospel according to St. *Matthew*, in Whole and in Part." I do not know that I have left one Objection unanswered, that tends to create a Doubt, whether St. *Matthew* was the Author of the Gospel that goes

goes by his Name, or whether he was qualified to be a faithful Historian in the Case; or lastly, whether the Gospel he wrote, hath been justly and honestly transmitted to us. I may now therefore presume to say, that the affirmative Side of all these Questions is the Truth. I may further venture to affirm, upon a particular Survey of them all, that the Cavils against the sacred Writings advanced in the *Dissertation* before us, are either so false or so frivolous as fully to justify the Right Reverend Author of the *Pastoral Letter*, for not interrupting the Course of his Argument, and trying the Patience of his Readers by the mention of them. So that whenever his Lordship intends another Edition, he will be under no Necessity to add or alter any thing for the Satisfaction of those, who are under his Direction, against the Arguments of Hereticks laid together by the *Dissertation-Writer*, for his Observation. The same Evidences for the Truth and Authority of the sacred Writings, will always satisfy reasonable and unprejudiced Men. What sort of Defence of those Books may be necessary against Infidels, it will be Time enough to consider, if ever his Lordship shall undertake a Work of that kind, with a direct and immediate View to their unhappy Case. But his present Concern is for those who have room for Conviction; who are not so far gone in Prejudice, nor such Bigots for Irreligion, as to make *rude* and *petulant* Returns for his *pious* and *kind* Offers to assist them in building their *Christianity* on a firm and a rational Bottom.

